RAGE IN THE GATE CITY

THE STORY OF THE 1906 ATLANTA RACE RIOT

REVISED EDITION

REBECCA BURNS

FOREWORD BY JUNE DOBBS BUTTS

VISIT…

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Revised Edition

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The Story of the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ *Revised Edition*

REBECCA BURNS

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Foreword

by June Dobbs Butts, EdD

I grew up hearing my father talk about "the race riot of nineteen aught six" long before I could understand his old-fashioned words. And though that unprovoked massacre of countless black people in the streets, shops, and homes of Atlanta no longer dominated our family's dinner conversation when I came along in 1928, the detritus of racial hatred from four days of senseless and random violence remained imbedded in Daddy's peripheral vision. As a newlywed of three months, my father spent each night of the riot crouched at the front door, gun in hand, ready to defend his loved ones. My parents lived with my mom's sister, her husband, and their young boys for several years after their marriage in that very home. And, since my dad had a gun (as a legal requirement of his job as a U.S. railway postal clerk-in-charge of an interracial crew) he guarded their home during those days of fury. Until his death in 1961, at age seventy-nine, his fervent prayer was, "God, keep me from becoming bitter—'cause I don't wanna hate anyone."

My dad's occupation during my youth was serving as Grand Master of the fraternal order of Prince Hall Masons in the State of Georgia. He was forty-six and my mother was forty-three when I was born, the sixth in an African American family of all daughters. (There was twenty years' difference between my oldest sister, Irene, and myself; I have no memory of her living at home, and didn't even get to know her as a person until after she'd

married and returned from a honeymoon in Europe.) Due to the influence of my five older sisters, the intellectual landscape of my childhood was vast. And, in the way of children, I believed that my family typified the outside world. However, like most African American youngsters, I encountered the withering, icy blast of racial hatred from Euro-Americans, despite the most loving efforts of parents and sisters to protect me. It just happened.

In 1932, when I was four, and my mother went out of town for a while, my dad tried to provide a treat in a safe environment. He took me and my sister, Mattiwilda, to the Lakewood Fairgrounds, which he knew to be federal property. I must have wandered away from him, for I can only recall being engrossed in a huge ice cream cone (a treat in those days of home-churned, Sundays-only ice cream). A little white girl came up to me and whispered "gimme some," and we both giggled as we took turns enjoying the treat that was rapidly melting in the hot Georgia sunshine. Suddenly, two tall, red-faced men appeared. One man picked up the little girl with one arm, holding her high in the air while spanking her hard with his other hand. The other man knocked my ice cream to the ground and stomped on it with his big black boot, transfixing it in the red Georgia clay. Muttering words I couldn't understand, he dropped on one knee to my level, slowly raising his arm. I held my breath, fearing a blow, but he was waving me off—and I ran like the wind! I could see my dad looking for me, but I wouldn't let myself cry until I was safe in his arms. Pointing behind me, I sobbed, "Those are some m-m-MEAN white folks, Daddy!" When he asked why I would say such a thing, I recall murmuring, "They d-don't think I'm cute." Even a child of four can differentiate between the look of love and the scowl of hate.

Over the decades that followed, I've seen many positive changes being wrought in Atlanta and throughout the South, and I've rejoiced in all these signs of progress—for example, the election of my nephew, Maynard Holbrook Jackson, as the first black mayor of a large southern city—without the sky falling. I have rejoiced in the enormous triumphs of my dear friend, Martin Luther King Jr., who brought hope to the hopeless, just as he vowed he would accomplish back in the days of our adolescence.

I've also seen the unfathomable emotional power plus economic return that accrues to businesses that entrench good old southern traditions into southern mores; glorifying the Civil War is a prime example.

I moved away from Atlanta and spent most of my adult life working in colleges and universities in the Northeast and Midwest. In 1994, at the invitation of then-director Dr. David Satcher of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, I returned to Atlanta and worked at the CDC as a Visiting Scientist. Taking up residence and happily tending to my own revered family roots, I became mindful of a new vitality, a type of resourcefulness that had taken root in my hometown. I found that new blood had become an intrinsic part of the city, changing the old Atlanta I'd known in my youth.

I became acquainted with members of the Coalition to Remember the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot, and joined forces with them. Thus, many decades after hearing my dad talk about the massacre of "aught six," I found a group of historians, writers, artists, ministers, students, and others who were working to acknowledge this shameful chapter in Atlanta's past. Beyond "acknowledgement": they were preparing a series of commemorative efforts to look as truthfully as possible at history — exposing the massacre of black people that had been camouflaged by then–city fathers, who euphemistically called it "a serious disturbance of the peace"!

The stated goal of the coalition was to foster an Atlanta of the future, a community it hoped to galvanize through a series of activities designed to bring the youth of Atlanta into closer association along social, civic, recreational, and spiritual lines — remembering the past, forging a future together.

As the daughter of a black man who had been directly affected by the violent events of 1906, and later became a civic leader fostering voter education, I felt programmed toward movements like the coalition. I became especially proud of Rebecca Burns's excellent book, *Rage in the Gate City*. From my experience as a teacher, I could see that more was needed than a one-time commemorative event. And because my academic background has been centered on the family in all its social, spiritual, and sexual con-

notations, I felt the central question facing us today is, how do we break through the emotional barriers that keep us isolated from—and fearful of our human need to live harmoniously with—each other? One way might be, very simply, to keep talking—pushing past the barriers that privileged people have erected to protect themselves from less-privileged folk. Learning how to empathize with each other is another way of learning to be a mature human being. Although the process is more effective when taught in early childhood, research has shown that great benefits may be gained at any age. We can learn to be humane.

For all these reasons, I have felt tremendously encouraged by Rebecca Burns's honest book, *Rage in the Gate City*, from the time we met as members of the coalition. Rebecca's scholarship is even more evident in this expanded and revised edition, which I hope will be used widely in the education of Georgia's youth. She offers us a tool designed to pry open our history. Written in her unique style, which is straightforward, yet compassionate, her story about the four deadly days in Atlanta emerges clear-cut, without disguising the senseless fury that consumed many top-echelon white Atlantans and rural white Georgians more than a century ago. For too long, this chapter of Atlanta's history was covered up, or was explained away by apologists as having stemmed, spontaneously, from the envious actions of a few unknown ruffians. Rebecca Burns casts the bright light of truth upon those events, offering every Georgian today a vital assist toward the goals of peace and brotherhood. I believe that books like *Rage in the Gate City* will bring healing by prompting honest discussion and fostering understanding.

DECATUR, GEORGIA
SEPTEMBER 2008

Notes on Language and Sources

This book is a work of nonfiction. It is structured as a narrative and contains scenes involving action and dialog. All statements within quotation marks come from newspaper accounts, diaries, letters, or other documents, and are sourced in the notes at the end of each chapter. In instances where I have paraphrased dialog from document sources, it appears without quotation marks.

In the interest of preserving a consistent historic sensibility throughout the narrative chapters, I elected to use the terms "black" and "white" to denote race rather than the contemporary and more culturally sensitive "African American" or "Caucasian." This is a stylistic decision and no offense is intended. Capitalization of the word "Negro" varies depending on the original source material in which the term was used. This is also done deliberately, because the usage reflects the attitude of the author or speaker and contributes to understanding the context of the statements made.

Source material for any story—and certainly one more than a century old—can be conflicting. In cases where accounts of an event vary, or where today's historians have different perspectives, I have elected to use the most reliable version in the main text and make comments detailing the discrepancies in end notes. This book is intended for a broad audience, and storytelling takes precedence over digressions into academic debate.

Unless otherwise stated, names, occupations, and addresses were confirmed through the *Atlanta City Directory*, 1905, 1906, and 1907 editions (Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center).

Population figures, income statistics, and other demographic details, unless otherwise noted, are from United States Census data.

Distances, locations, and other geographic details were confirmed using archival maps at Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, and digital Sanborn Fire Insurance maps through the Georgia State University Library, http://www.library.gsu.edu.

Most general facts on Atlanta history, major institutions, newspapers, and city government are drawn from Franklin Garrett's *Atlanta and Environs,* Walter Cooper's *Official History of Fulton County,* John Dittmer's *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era*, Edward R. Carter's *The Black Side*, and Thomas Martin's *Atlanta and Its Builders.*

Rage in the Gate City

Revised Edition

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Introduction

Atlanta, 1906

> "The South is the most unique part of our country. With its rare climate, remarkable fertility, romantic history, and baffling racial atmosphere, it holds a fascination no other part of our country does."
>
> — HENRY HUGH PROCTOR, *Between Black and White*, 1925

When W. E. B. Du Bois came to Atlanta in 1897, he encountered a city of contrasts. As a professor at Atlanta University, Du Bois worked at a gorgeous campus on one of the area's highest hills, surrounded by a cluster of colleges and seminaries. Atlanta was home to the highest concentration of educated African Americans in America.[1]

One of Du Bois's fellow professors was Adrienne Herndon, a Boston-trained actress whose husband, Alonzo, a former slave, opened a number of successful barbershops and shrewdly invested in real estate, becoming the wealthiest black resident of Atlanta. The Herndons and Du Bois attended First Congregational Church, whose pastor, Henry Hugh Proctor, was a Yale-educated theologian, and where their fellow congregants included physician William Penn (another Yale graduate) and school principal W. B. Matthews. To visit his fellow academic W. E. Bowen of Gammon Theological Seminary, Du Bois would go to the community of Brownsville, a middle-class, African American enclave of fifteen hundred residents,

with its own school, post office, churches, and shops. On Auburn Avenue, he would find Gate City Drug Store, owned by Moses Amos, the first black pharmacist in Georgia, Gus Williams's Piedmont Ice Cream Store, and the office building erected in 1904 by Henry Rucker, a former slave who had been appointed Internal Revenue Service officer for the Georgia region by President McKinley.

Black-owned pharmacies, retailers, restaurants, funeral homes, grocers, and a weekly newspaper, the *Atlanta Independent*, served the African American community, which accounted for forty percent of the metro area's total population. No wonder that Atlanta was the site of the August 1906 annual convention of Booker T. Washington's National Negro Business League; the Gate City seemed to be a model of entrepreneurial success and social tolerance, living up to the promise that *Atlanta Constitution* managing editor and city booster Henry W. Grady had made twenty years before when he declared it capital of the New South.

Atlanta's educated, middle- and upper-class black community of 1906 would have been unimaginable four decades earlier, when Atlanta was only a tiny terminal town left smoldering in the wake of the Civil War and virtually all of its African American residents were recently emancipated slaves.

The success of the city's white business and civic leaders was likewise remarkable. Atlanta had grown from a small railway hub of less than 10,000 residents before the Civil War, to a bustling urban center with a population of more than 115,000. Named the capital of Georgia after the war, Atlanta was home to entrepreneurs like Asa G. Candler, who had parlayed Coca-Cola from a medicinal tonic into a popular fountain drink, and in 1906 was building the city's tallest skyscraper. Atlanta was a place where Confederate veteran Captain James Warren English, penniless after the war, had amassed a fortune in cotton, bricks, and railroad interests and opened a major bank. Visiting Atlanta in 1906, Progressive-Era journalist Ray Stannard Baker observed, "its streets are well paved and well lighted, its streetcar service is good, its skyscrapers are comparable with the best in the North."[2]

But the Atlanta in which Du Bois, the Herndons, and Dr. William Penn lived was a parallel universe to the world of Captain English, Asa Candler, and *Constitution* editor Clark Howell. If Du Bois, the first African American awarded a PhD by Harvard, wanted to travel across Atlanta by streetcar, he would be forced to sit in the back, or give up his seat to white passengers. He could not enter the Piedmont Hotel to have a drink in its luxurious lobby, or eat in most of Atlanta's restaurants. He could not get a haircut or shave in one of the mahogany chairs of Alonzo Herndon's barbershop on Peachtree Street. And Du Bois, a New England native who had studied in Berlin and Paris, could not interact with the white academics and students at Atlanta colleges like Agnes Scott and Georgia Tech.

In 1906, Atlanta's sizable educated, middle-class black community lived in one sphere, while in another lived thousands of wealthy, educated whites. The two groups rarely intersected. Any members of the opposite race these elite Atlantans encountered were most likely poor or working-class—and illiterate. Against the publicized backdrop of success of Atlanta's black and white entrepreneurs and educators, a sizable percentage of the population was still uneducated and living in barely tolerable conditions.

Business and cultural achievement fueled Atlanta's growth, which also was boosted by an influx of rural southerners, desperate for employment in a state that had seen its agricultural economy destroyed by war. The whites that Dr. Penn would encounter on the streetcars were most likely working-class; the blacks that Asa Candler likely encountered would be servants or laborers. Walking out of his offices at Five Points in downtown Atlanta, Captain English would be more likely to run across unemployed black men clustered near Decatur Street bars than Ivy League graduates like Henry Hugh Proctor and W. E. B. Du Bois. Traveling through Alabama and Georgia on research projects, Du Bois was more likely to come across poor whites eking out livings as sharecroppers than attorneys like Charles Hopkins and Luther Rosser.

As Du Bois himself told an audience of the American Political Science Association gathering in Washington, D.C., in 1901, "the best of the Negroes and the best of the whites almost never live in anything like close

proximity. It thus happens that in nearly every Southern town and city, both whites and blacks see commonly the worst of each other."[3]

Atlanta's commercial and civic leaders happily paid homage to the Henry Grady concept of the city as capital of a "New South" of racial tolerance and business-first attitudes—as long as they remained firmly in power. In the forty years after the Civil War, white politicians, ministers, and businessmen continued to chip away at blacks' efforts at progress. Whites instituted increasingly rigid Jim Crow laws that controlled everything from what seats blacks could use on the streetcars to what outer garments they could wear—African Americans were, for instance, inexplicably forbidden to wear capes.

Efforts to undermine black power in Georgia peaked in the summer of 1906 as Hoke Smith, former publisher of the *Atlanta Journal*, and Clark Howell, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, battled for the Democratic nomination in a vicious gubernatorial contest. Smith allied with segregationist Populist Tom Watson and put black disenfranchisement at the cornerstone of his platform. Smith and Watson argued that existing measures to reduce African American voter participation—such as literacy requirements and poll taxes—would only spur blacks to pursue education and commercial success, and thereby cut poor illiterate whites out of the electoral process altogether. Both Smith and Howell played to white fears of political and economic domination by blacks, but the campaign became virulent when Smith, with Watson's aid, added sex into the equation. The resulting campaign message was simple: give blacks political equality and they'll demand social equality, which will be manifest as sexual relations between black men and white women.

Over the summer of 1906, the Smith-Watson message was fueled by Atlanta's daily newspapers, which published sensational stories about a series of alleged sexual assaults on white women by black men. While the *Journal* and *Constitution* couched the stories in the context of their political candidates' campaign messages, the dueling evening tabloids, the *Atlanta Evening News* and the *Atlanta Georgian,* both sensational in the Hearst vein, played up the reports for prurient effect. The papers' editors infused

both the news coverage and their editorial pages with racist rhetoric. In mid-August, Charles Daniel, editor of the *News*, praised a lynch mob in South Carolina for its vigilante justice in the case of an alleged sex crime, writing, "Today South Carolina stands at the forefront of Southern patriotism in this hour. Tomorrow, Georgia may claim the honor."[4]

The poisonous mix of white resentment, sensational (and mostly fabricated) newspaper accounts of sex crimes, and a race-baiting political battle came to a head on Saturday, September 22, when Atlanta newspapers released "extra" editions reporting that four assaults by black men on white women had taken place that single day. By ten o'clock that night, downtown Atlanta resembled a lower level of hell. Thousands of whites swarmed the streets and attacked blacks on sight. In a telling display of hatred, rioters stacked corpses of three victims on the base of the Henry W. Grady statue on Marietta Street, demonstrating with grisly candor their response to Grady's vision of a progressive and tolerant "New South."

Over the next three days, Atlanta was the scene of intermittent and senseless violence. State militia troops, summoned by the governor to quell the riot, were preoccupied with protecting whites from feared retaliatory attacks rather than safeguarding the African Americans, who were hunted down in their homes, schools, churches, and businesses.

The Atlanta riot left at least twenty-five African Americans dead and dozens injured, caused extensive property damage, and prompted an exodus by more than a thousand of the city's working- and middle-class black residents.

Like the court hearings and newspaper analyses that immediately followed the riot, early- to midcentury histories of Atlanta place the blame for the violence on the sensational newspaper articles. The rabble who rioted, these accounts claim, were working-class or unemployed young men and boys, driven to rage by a deadly mix of lurid news stories, a sweltering day, and hours of drinking on a half-holiday. The "better element" of white Atlanta, these accounts state, was not involved at all.

While eyewitness accounts and newspaper reports support assertions that most of the rioters were blue-collar, contemporary historians are ex-

ploring the role that upper-class white Atlanta might have played, whether directly by encouraging violence, or tacitly by ignoring it. Certainly law enforcement and elected officials responded slowly; the militia was not called until rioting had gone on for three hours, and the sheriff, claiming his phone lines had been cut, only responded after being awakened by newspaper reporters.

In the days that immediately followed, the Atlanta riot made national and international headlines, but a century later the riot has been sanitized or omitted from many of the city's histories. In his *Atlanta and Environs* series, Franklin Garrett, long considered by many white Atlantans the city's de facto official historian, devotes only a fraction of a chapter to the riot, reprinting the chamber of commerce report almost verbatim and asserting unquestioningly that the "immediate cause" was a "series of assaults upon white women by brutal Negroes." Even as late as May 2008, the Atlanta History Center did not include the riot on its downloadable history-of-Atlanta timeline.[5]

In a seminal 1968 and 1969 pair of *Journal of Negro History* articles, Charles Crowe examined the events in the context of socioeconomic and political conditions in Atlanta. He concluded that the riot, like those in Danville, Virginia, in 1893 and Wilmington, North Carolina, in 1898, had "clear political overtones" and resulted in reinforcing white control of the city. Crowe did not directly accuse white leadership in Atlanta of starting the riot, but did say that when the events "burst into reality with the full impact of a long expected nightmare on 'bloody Saturday' September 22, white Atlanta seemed to be surrendering to its own sense of inevitability."[6]

In 2005, a commission studying the Wilmington race riot released a report that directly linked planned violence by white supremacists to cooperation by local papers and business leaders and called for reparations to be made to the African American residents and businesses negatively affected by the riot. The results of the Wilmington commission are being widely publicized in an effort to understand how that riot affected social and economic patterns in the city and state. In Atlanta, a coalition of educators, historians, civic and cultural groups, and churches staged a centen-

nial commemoration of the 1906 riot that included new scrutiny of the old histories.[7]

Contemporary historian Gregory Mixon, who has conducted extensive research on the riot's genesis, asserts in his 2005 book, *The Atlanta Riot: Race, Class, and Violence in a New South City*, that "Atlanta's commercial-civic elite actively initiated the anti-black violence of September 22–25, 1906," using the episode as a springboard to "secure their hold and impose their agendas on the city."[8]

While debate continues over whether the riot's outbreak was premeditated, a look at the events immediately following the worst violence shines light on the collective downplaying of the events by city leaders of both races. On Tuesday, September 25, 1906, the fourth day of violence, black and white leaders gathered for an unprecedented meeting during which they discussed methods of quelling the hostility and repairing damage to Atlanta's image. For many attendees, the gathering marked the first time that the parallel universes of elite black and white Atlanta intersected.

That meeting, and a series of cooperative efforts throughout the fall of 1906, can be seen either as setting the stage for Atlanta's later reputation for tolerance, or as leading to further segregation between the races and dominance by the white elite. In either case, those interracial cooperative efforts directly led to the diminished place of the riot in Atlanta's history. The violence of 1906 was nothing leaders of either race wanted the outside world to remember.

"Atlanta's long-standing axiom that racial progress hinges on elite biracial cooperation was born of the riot," notes historian David Fort Godshalk, whose 2005 book, *Veiled Visions: The 1906 Atlanta Race Riot and the Reshaping of American Race Relations*, focuses on the reverberating impact of the riot's aftermath. "Since then, the city's public relations machinery has played a crucial role in keeping this formula for racial understanding lodged in American minds."[9]

In the century since September 1906's white-on-black violent outbreak and the carefully orchestrated cooperation that followed, Atlanta's business and civic leaders have continued to work together across racial lines. This

history of cooperation, borne of the 1906 riot, has propelled Atlanta into a position of civil rights leadership. The city is the birthplace of Martin Luther King Jr., the site of nonviolent integration in the 1950s and 1960s, home of the South's first black big-city mayor and first black female mayor, and now the number-one destination for upwardly mobile black professionals. It would be easy, in the classic model of Atlanta boosterism, to point to the riot as a deadly, but fruitful, instigator of these positive social changes. And indeed, some of the participants considered the outcome of the riot positive for Atlanta. In his autobiography, *Between Black and White,* Reverend Proctor, instrumental in brokering talks between black and white Atlantans, wrote of the aftermath, "The breaches were healed, the work of cooperation between the better elements of both races progressed, and it was the unanimous opinion that the city was better afterwards than before."[10]

But in the negotiations that followed the riot, leaders like Proctor also agreed to use their influence to persuade black Atlantans to comply with Jim Crow laws, to stay in segregated neighborhoods, and to accommodate demands of white leadership. Businesses and homes destroyed by whites in the riot were rebuilt or reopened in black neighborhoods, and thus the limited interaction between the races was further curtailed. Today Atlanta, while known—and justly so—for interracial cooperation at the highest levels of city business and politics, remains almost as socially and residentially segregated as it was a century ago. The effects of September 1906 have lingered in the minds of Atlantans, and in the very patterns of its streets and buildings.

1

A Lynching in Lakewood

> "With a flash the deed was done and it will always remain a mystery who was responsible for the death."
> —*Atlanta Constitution*, August 1, 1906

Here is the story that Annie Laurie Poole told.[1]

By ten on the morning of July 31, 1906, it was already brutally hot and she decided to take a detour and pick some melons on the way to her neighbor's place. She would offer Mrs. Cheshire a melon or two, take some home, and maybe enjoy one as she walked. A particularly fertile cantaloupe patch flourished off the side of Hapeville Road, which led from the Poole family property to the Cheshires' farm.

Annie Laurie scrambled down from the road to the melon patch and started to pick the fruit, using her big sunbonnet as a basket. As she plopped the melons into her hat, she heard a noise in the undergrowth, and when she turned, saw a man dart out from behind the scrubby trees and weeds. He was a large black man, very tall, and he waved a thick stick, like a club, in his hand. Annie Laurie screamed as he grabbed her and she kept on screaming as he used her hair to yank her across the vines and dirt—a full forty feet—into a thicket of trees. Then, as he forced himself on her, she screamed, and she screamed, and she screamed, until she fainted.

That's what she remembered happening, anyway.

A little black boy who worked at a farm down the way heard Annie Laurie scream and ran to tell Mrs. Poole. She raced down Hapeville Road

to find her daughter, and as she ran she shouted for neighbors to help. They found Annie Laurie lying on the ground at the edge of the field, the red clay around her tramped and scuffed as though there had been a tremendous fight.

Neighbors carried the limp girl home. Annie Laurie's distraught mother, Laura Poole, called the neighborhood doctor, O. N. Hardin, and then put in a call to a city doctor, Monroe Smith. She summoned the sheriff, too, and word spread quickly among the Pooles' neighbors that Annie Laurie, a fine-looking girl of fifteen, had been "assaulted."

With the physicians' aid, Annie Laurie revived, and as the doctors, her mother and brothers, law officers, and neighbors crowded around, she told her story. She gave a description of her attacker—an exceptionally tall black man with thick lips and a flat nose, wearing a dirty old white hat, blue overalls, and a black shirt. I can identify him if you catch him, she assured Deputy Sheriff Ferguson.

Riled up by news of an assault, angry men and boys gathered in front of the Poole place; they brought guns, horses, and bloodhounds. They split into search parties that fanned out over Annie Laurie's neighborhood, Lakewood, a bucolic farming community about four miles south of downtown Atlanta. Some searchers—among them Annie Laurie's brothers, James and Crandal—got in boats and rowed across the lake so they could search the black community of Brownsville, just to the west on the other side of the water.

Early that afternoon, a call came into the sheriff's office reporting that a black man who met Annie Laurie's description was spotted asking for work at the Louisville and Nashville railroad–crossing construction site. Deputy Ferguson arrested the man, Tom Robertson, took him to Atlanta, and locked him in the Tower, the imposing prison that had recently been completed at a cost of $175,000. Around the same time that Officer Ferguson arrested and jailed Tom Robertson, officers patrolling the black neighborhood of Pittsburg, just south of the city center, detained another man who met Annie Laurie's description. He, too, was taken to the Tower.

News of the "outrage"—the common euphemism for rape—spread

Atlanta in the early twentieth century.

much faster than news of the two arrests. Annie Laurie's cousin, T. M. Poole, her neighbor, B. L. Johnson, and a local fireman, Simon McGhee, searched Lakewood for three hours and were just about to give up hope when they came to a wooden shanty and saw standing right in front of it T.M.'s bloodhound, Troupe. The men pushed the dog out of the way and stormed into the shanty. Several black men and one black woman sat on low stools inside the shed. In the dim light T.M. could see that one of the men was very tall. The other occupants of the shanty told T.M. that the tall man, Frank Carmichael, had arrived less than half an hour earlier and had

been given a change of clothes. A pair of shoes covered in red mud stood by the doorway, and T.M. took them to be evidence that Carmichael must be the man who had violated his cousin in the red-clay melon patch.

T.M. grabbed Carmichael by the arm and dragged him out of the hut, with Johnson, McGhee, and the hound following. They made their way along a path toward Annie Laurie's house, taking a back route in the interest of speed. As they came to a creek, Carmichael tried to wrench away from Poole, but Annie Laurie's cousin seized the tall man's arm while Johnson and McGhee put their guns to either side of his head. In that tight configuration, the foursome walked the rest of the way to the Poole home.

Fifty men and boys milled about in front of the house. As the search party and their quarry approached, the crowd eased back, leaving a crescent-shaped clearing before Annie Laurie's front door. In that open space, the new arrivals stood—the tall black man in the center, Annie Laurie's cousin, T.M., holding his arm, and Johnson and McGhee with pistols cocked and pointed at each of Carmichael's temples. The assembled men bellowed for Annie Laurie to come and identify the attacker.

After a few moments, the girl appeared at the door, supported by her mother.

"Oh! It is him," Annie Laurie said when she saw Carmichael.[2]

Forty guns fired at once.

Carmichael fell to the ground and blood seeped into the dirt under his body. Blood also spurted from T. M. Poole's palm; in the barrage of gunfire one bullet had pierced his hand. Johnson gripped his upper arm; a stray shell had lodged in the flesh of his shoulder.

Sheriff's deputies examined Carmichael and realized he was still alive, so they announced he would be taken to Atlanta and turned over to the authorities. Dr. Hardin, still on hand after tending to Annie Laurie, kneeled over the bleeding black man and gave him opiates to alleviate his pain. Then several men lifted Carmichael's limp body into a donkey-drawn wagon, and the posse and the law enforcement officers headed up Hapeville Road to Jonesboro Road, which led to downtown.

At the front of the procession rode a squadron of men on horseback. Behind them came the wagon in which Carmichael lay among the farm implements. A few carts brought up the rear. The air was thick with the humid, heavy heat of a Georgia summer afternoon, and storm clouds darkened as the horses and wagons moved on.

They had reached Atlanta when one of the posse looked down into the wagon as he rode alongside on horseback, and noticed that Carmichael had stopped breathing. Never mind that, he's dead, the man called out. Let's go on to the city, and show Annie Laurie's father that his daughter's honor has been avenged.

They made their way toward John Poole's Pryor Street grocery store. Clerks dashed out of the stores and businesses along the route; many joined the grim parade. As they came to the busy shopping district of Whitehall Street, they passed a group of black men and women wearing mourning clothes; it was a funeral procession headed in the opposite direction. The two groups passed each other, and members of each party gawked as the wagons drew abreast, one a hearse with a coffin laid out in state, one containing a bullet-riddled corpse sprawled atop seed bags.

As the group moved on toward Pryor Street, Annie Laurie's brothers, James and Crandal, galloped up. They had rowed back across the lake in order to catch up with the posse. The brothers announced that they wanted to torch Carmichael on the spot, cremating him in the streets of Atlanta.

Just as the brothers dismounted and headed for a shop to buy oil to douse Carmichael's body, a thunderclap erupted. Amid the rumble of the starting storm, older men in the group calmed James and Crandal and urged them to drop the body off at the undertaker's.

Heavy rain fell as the posse reached the blacks-only Broad Street mortuary run by Lucius Lee and his sons, Charles and Lucius Jr. They left Carmichael's body there and headed back to Lakewood.

When Lee and his sons prepared Carmichael for burial, they found six bullet wounds in the man's body; three shots had passed straight through his chest.

★★★

No charges were filed in the death of Frank Carmichael or the accidental injuries of T. M. Poole and B. L. Johnson. Officers who witnessed the shooting said there was such commotion it would be impossible to pinpoint blame.

There was no further investigation into Annie Laurie's accusations, even though by the end of the day, after physicians Hardin and Smith reexamined the girl, they found no evidence of any injuries, and certainly no sign that any sexual molestation had taken place. Their diagnosis: "a nervous character."[3]

Rather than speculating that the teenage girl may have merely been startled by a passerby, or even staged the incident for attention, white Atlantans assumed Carmichael must have been up to no good. Later that evening, when a newspaperman from the *Atlanta Constitution* came to Lakewood to cover the incident, the Pooles' neighbor, Mittie Hall, assured him that she had recognized Carmichael; he had made her worried about her own safety when she saw him, just the day before, skulking around Lakewood. The reporter filed the story about the case, and it ran under the headline "In Presence of Outraged Girl, Black Fiend is Shot to Death by Enraged Atlanta Citizens."

And that's how Frank Carmichael's story ended.

2

Politics of Fear

> "In a land of light and beauty and love our women are prisoners of danger and fear. While the heathen walks his native heath unharmed and unafraid, in this fair Christian Southland, our sisters, wives, and daughters dare not stroll at twilight through the streets, or step beyond the highway at noon."
> —THOMAS DIXON, *The Clansman*, 1905

James and Crandal Poole's plan to douse Frank Carmichael's body with oil and set it aflame was not an original notion. Ritual cremation was common practice after a lynching—a term that in 1906 applied to not only hanging but also to any form of death by vigilante justice. Before burning a victim's corpse, members of lynch posses often claimed body parts as souvenirs. Sometimes, this dismemberment was carried out while the victim was still alive. Fingers and toes were particularly popular keepsakes.

Even the most horror-hardened Atlantans had been shocked seven years earlier by the grisly 1899 lynching of Sam Hose, a black laborer charged with the murder of his employer, Alfred Cranford, a farmer in Palmetto, a Coweta County town about thirty-two miles southwest of Atlanta. Hose admitted to striking Cranford with an axe, but said he had made the attack at the prompting of another black laborer, Lige Strickland, who had hired him to do the deed for twenty dollars, and did not know there had

been a fatal outcome. Hose fled the area, triggering a massive manhunt. While posses combed the region in search of Hose, Cranford's wife told the Atlanta newspapers that Hose had not only viciously murdered her husband by beating his brains out with an axe at the supper table, traumatizing their young children, but that he had also destroyed her honor by sexually outraging her.

The governor posted a five-hundred-dollar reward for Hose's arrest, and *Constitution* editor Clark Howell and business manager W. A. Hemphill agreed to match the amount. With cash in play and tempers inflamed by Mrs. Cranford's story, thousands of men from Georgia and surrounding states joined the search for Hose. The *Constitution* ran frequent updates on the manhunt, predicting that Hose's capture would result in immediate execution. In a statement that would prove gruesomely prophetic, the *Constitution* declared, "When Hose is caught he will either be lynched and his body riddled with bullets or he will be burned at the stake."

A posse tracked down Sam Hose on Sunday, April 23, 1899, and took him to Newnan, a few miles away from Palmetto. Although there had been plans to take Hose on to Palmetto and kill him on the Cranford plantation, mob justice prevailed, and the men decided to execute Hose in Newnan, in broad daylight and in plain view of spectators.

Hose pleaded that Strickland had set him up and that he had never touched Mrs. Cranford. But the posse ignored him and took him to a roadside clearing not far from the train depot. Word of his capture traveled back to Atlanta, and the railroad company added special trains to the regular Sunday rail service to accommodate gawkers who wanted to travel from Atlanta to Newnan for the event.

More than two thousand people came to witness the execution. Hose was stripped and tied by his wrists to a tree. His ears were sliced off and his internal organs gutted. Then a bonfire was lit at his feet. As the flesh burned off Hose's body and fell into the blaze below, souvenir hunters grubbed in the ashes, looking for his bones. Some accounts say that Hose's liver, removed before the fire was lit, had been grilled, with slices sold for ten cents to onlookers. By the end of the afternoon, nothing was left in the

clearing but the stump of the tree to which Hose had been fastened; even the tree's top had been hacked off and taken away by a spectator.

A few days later, Lige Strickland was dragged away from his cabin as his wife and five children cried for mercy. Strickland's employer, retired major W. W. Thomas, pursued the mob and pleaded for Strickland's life. But the posse ignored Thomas's requests for mercy and Strickland's vehement denial of having any part in the Cranford affair. The posse hung Strickland from the branches of a persimmon tree outside of Palmetto. His ears and the pinky finger of his left hand were removed as souvenirs.[1]

★★★

The lynching of Sam Hose proved to be a pivotal personal turning point for Atlanta University professor W. E. B. Du Bois. A sociologist and the first black awarded a PhD by Harvard, Du Bois moved to Atlanta in 1897, idealistic and motivated to be a champion of his race. New England born and raised, Du Bois had been shocked by the overt racial prejudices of the South and increasingly frustrated by the Jim Crow segregation laws passed in Atlanta and throughout the region as the new century dawned.

When he heard that the *Constitution* had contributed reward money for the capture of Hose, and that the newspaper had predicted a lynching, Du Bois wrote a letter to the newspaper's editor and set out to present a case for allowing Hose a legal hearing. As he was en route to deliver the letter, he learned that Hose had been killed. As he walked back to the university campus, he saw Hose's knuckles on display in a shop window just a few doors from the *Constitution* offices.

"Something died in me," he wrote many years later, describing the day he learned of Hose's gruesome death and the cavalier celebration by whites.[2]

★★★

Between 1890 and 1900, more than 115 black men had been lynched in Georgia, the Southern state with the highest lynching rate. When the

Hoke Smith, Georgia governor. Photographed circa 1912. Courtesy, Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-66573.

Lakewood posse shot and killed Frank Carmichael in the summer of 1906, they did more than create a grim addition to those statistics; Carmichael also became a pawn in an increasingly vitriolic political battle fought in campaign rallies, at fundraising dinners, and on the pages of Atlanta's leading daily newspapers.

In the 1906 Democratic gubernatorial primary, Hoke Smith, former publisher of the *Atlanta Journal*, was the frontrunner. Smith, who had begun his campaign in June 1905, faced five contenders: Newnan minister G. A. Nunnally; former judge Richard B. Russell; Savannah newspaperman John Estill; James Monroe Smith, a farmer who had amassed a four-million-dollar fortune in part by using leased convicts to work his fields alongside freed slaves; and Clark Howell, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution* and son of its legendary publisher, Evan P. Howell.[3]

Clark Howell, *Atlanta Constitution* editor, photographed in 1914. Courtesy, Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-134704.

After denouncing Hoke Smith as a libertine whose swanky Piedmont Hotel represented a "cesspool of sin," Nunnally dropped out of the race early. The remaining four rivals collectively attacked Smith. Eventually the two-man contest between Smith and Howell became the most contentious as each used the newspaper at his disposal to fire political ammunition.

Smith was an ordinary-looking man who commanded attention because of his height—just over six feet—and sturdy build. Tutored by his father, a professor at the University of North Carolina, Smith proved to be an intellectual prodigy and had been admitted to the Georgia Bar at the age of seventeen. He shrewdly invested fees earned as an attorney and bought the *Journal* in 1887. Smith became active in politics and campaigned vigorously in Grover Cleveland's successful 1892 presidential race. These efforts were rewarded with a position in the cabinet, where he served as secretary

of the interior. He stepped down in 1896 and went back to his Atlanta law practice and business interests. In 1900, he sold the *Journal* to his friend James R. Gray—at a $290,000 profit.

During his time in Washington, D.C., Smith earned a reputation as a reformer for instituting federal forest conservation projects. As an Atlanta newspaperman, he crusaded against the convict leasing system and campaigned for increased public education funds. Thus, observers of Georgia politics initially were surprised during the 1906 gubernatorial race when Smith, known for progressive views, allied himself with segregationist Populist Tom Watson. Grandson of a plantation owner in Thomson, Georgia, Tom Watson found his childhood comforts shattered by the Civil War, which left his family destitute. Three decades after the end of the war, Watson entered politics, winning a seat in Congress in 1890. He took up the cause of poor farmers in an 1892 bid for re-election to Congress, during which he urged an alliance between black and white farmers, a strategy that had everything to do with gaining votes and virtually nothing to do with social integration. Even though he had saved a black supporter from a lynch party, Watson consistently advocated racial segregation and never pledged that black supporters would be rewarded with political positions.[4]

Watson's strategy didn't win him re-election to Congress, but it did garner national notoriety and the vice presidential slot on the 1896 Populist Party ticket with William Jennings Bryan. After losing that election, Watson retreated to Thomson, and bought Hickory Hill, a mansion at the edge of the town where his grandfather's plantation had been. In 1904, Watson ran—unsuccessfully—as the Populist presidential candidate. After losing that race, Watson announced he would focus on his home state and ally himself with any Georgia reform candidate who also supported black disenfranchisement. Smith seized the political opportunity, and joined forces with the gangly orator known as "The Sage of Hickory Hill."

Together Smith and Watson crafted a political message that played to white fears of miscegenation and promoted disenfranchisement of black voters. The pair drew on a symbol that roiled white Southerners—physi-

cal intimacy between black men and white women. At its most essential, Smith's campaign stump speech could be distilled to this message: give black men political equality, and the next thing you know, they'll want social equality—and nothing means equality like sex. Giving black men the vote, Smith and Watson decreed, is equal to giving them your wives and daughters.

An ally of the Watson-Smith team was Rebecca Latimer Felton, who'd been involved in Georgia politics as campaign manager for her husband, William Felton, and who was an influential newspaper columnist. Her "Country Home" column, written for the rural edition of the *Journal,* was widely read and covered both domestic subjects and heated political topics. Latimer Felton was a champion of female rights but also a notorious advocate of lynching in cases of sexual assault. In an 1897 speech, she stated: "If it takes lynching to protect women's dearest possession from drunken, ravening beasts, then I say lynch a thousand a week." That speech was cited as one factor triggering a deadly race riot in Wilmington, North Carolina, the following year.[5]

Equating black political power with sexual dominance of white women had been the core rationale for the Ku Klux Klan, which formed during Reconstruction and terrorized freed blacks. The KKK had been dormant in Georgia, but interest in it had been rekindled in the early 1900s following the publications of Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman*, the second in the North Carolina minister's trilogy of novels on the history of the Klan. Dixon's novels—written in the florid and melodramatic style of nineteenth-century romances—told tales of hapless, virtuous southern white mothers and daughters, preyed upon by brutish black men and avenged by enraged husbands and brothers, whose swift action represented patriotic loyalty—to the old South. *The Clansman,* which had been serialized in the *Journal,* became a stage play, which toured the South and played to capacity audiences in Atlanta.[6]

Frank Carmichael's lynching, the *Journal*'s editorial warned, represented much more than a fatal case of mistaken identity. Indeed, they suggested, Carmichael's guilt or innocence was irrelevant. The mere possibility that

Annie Laurie *could* have been attacked demonstrated the potential threat of what would happen if Georgia's black men continued to take part in the state's political process. Give black Georgians the ability to cast votes, the *Journal* noted, echoing Hoke Smith's stump speech, and the next thing you know, they'd want far greater liberties.

"You must resolve," the *Journal* urged readers the day after Annie Laurie Poole claimed she had been attacked in a melon patch and a vengeful posse shot Frank Carmichael to death, "that political power shall never give the negro encouragement in his foul dreams of a mixture of the races." Encourage the black man too much, the *Journal* noted, and "he lies in wait, as that dastardly brute did yesterday near this city, and assaults the fair young girlhood of the South."[7]

Two days after Annie Laurie's reported assault, the *Journal* went further, saying that blame for attacks on innocent girls like Annie Laurie should not be placed on "the poor benighted negro" but instead, "the guilt must be shared by those white men who have given the negro encouragement to believe that he can ever be a factor in politics." Men, the editorial suggested, like Clark Howell, and his predecessor, *Constitution* managing editor Henry Grady, the champion of a New South. The *Journal* advised its readers—and voters in the primary election just weeks off—that only "when the negro is permanently disenfranchised, when he sees there is no more a hope for him to take part in politics, [will he] be docile and quiet."[8]

In his campaign speeches, Smith, an impassioned and eloquent orator, argued that unless blacks were rendered powerless by loss of the vote, their "savage, vicious, inhuman" traits would prevail and crime would continue, bringing with it the inevitable response of vigilante justice.

Smith asked his audiences, "Shall it be ballots now or bullets later?"[9]

3

The Gate City

> "They of Atlanta turned resolutely toward the future; and that future held aloft vistas of purple and gold:—Atlanta, Queen of the Cotton Kingdom; Atlanta, Gateway to the Land of the Sun. . . . So the city crowned her hundred hills with factories and stored her shops with cunning handiwork, and stretched long iron ways to greet the busy Mercury in his coming. And the Nation talked of her striving."
>
> —W. E. B. DU BOIS, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903

The outcome of the board meeting held Tuesday, August 7, 1906, surprised few in attendance. With little debate, Fourth National Bank's directors elected James Warren English Jr. to be vice president, awarding him the spot left open by the resignation of Walker P. Inman. It could be said that nepotism worked in his favor: English's father, James Warren English Sr., had founded Fourth National and groomed his namesake in the family businesses—brick manufacturing and banking. But the younger James W. English had plenty of credentials in his own right. After all, he was president of both Palmer Brick Company and Lookout Mountain Coal and Coke.[1]

In addition to a name and business interests, father and son shared the same bold facial features; the prominent nose and severe eyebrows were

most remarkable. But no one called them "Senior" and "Junior"; Atlantans universally referred to the elder James W. as "Captain English."

Captain English, left fatherless while still a young boy, moved to Griffin, Georgia, south of Atlanta, at the age of ten, to serve as an apprentice to his uncle, a carriage maker. He enlisted in the Confederate army at the age of twenty-four, and in his course of service with the Spaulding Grays (which later became part of the Second Georgia Battalion), English was wounded in action five times. Atlantans knew that Captain English had been loyal to the Confederate cause up to the bitter end, remaining alongside General Robert E. Lee at Appomattox.[2]

From the boardroom in Fourth National's sixteen-story Italianate office building, erected in 1905 at the corner of Peachtree and Marietta streets, Captain English, his son, and rest of the bank directors could look out over a metropolis that no one would have dreamed possible forty years earlier when Sherman's march left the city in rubble and smoldering wreckage. A dirt-road enclave of scruffy tavern owners, traders, and railroad workers before the war, Atlanta was named state capital in 1868, three years after the Union army declared victory. Over the following four decades, Atlanta secured a reputation as not only the capital of Georgia, but also the perceived capital of the New South.

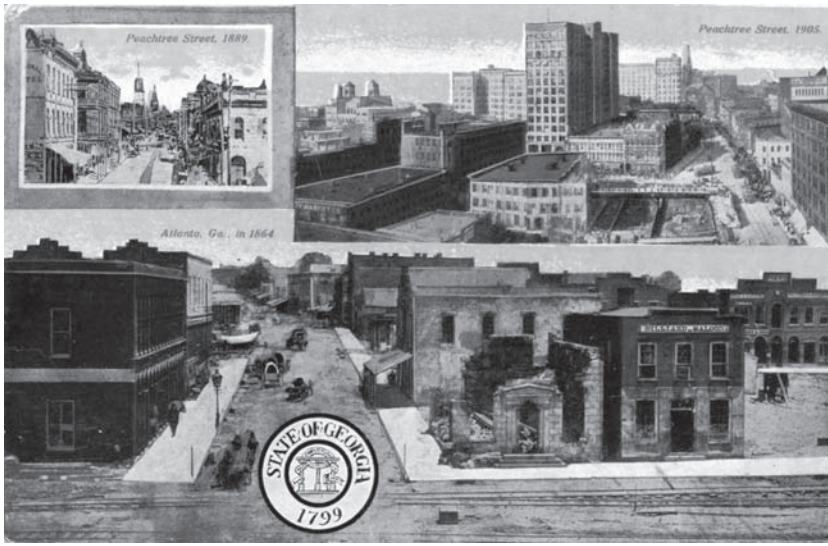
Like thousands of veterans from both the Union and Confederate forces, Captain English made his way to Atlanta at the end of the war, seeking his fortune during the opportunity-rich days of Reconstruction. Putting aside earnings from stints clerking—first in shops, then in a hotel—he had invested in real estate. With profits from those ventures, he started Chattahoochee Brick Company. Captain English built a powerful dynasty in part thanks to Georgia's infamous convict leasing system, which allowed businesses to retain the services of chain gangs at extremely low rates. Convicts could be used to produce enormous quantities of bricks at a great profit.

Captain English was a member of the committee of Atlantans who had lobbied for the city to be made capital of Georgia. Elected mayor of Atlanta in 1881, Captain English oversaw the city's early street-paving

Terminal Station, 1905. Geographic Places Collection, Atlanta Area Photographs, Special Collections Department & Archives, Georgia State University Library.

efforts; Alabama, Peachtree, and Whitehall streets were the first to be macadamized. He also had a heavy hand in much of Atlanta's early planning (and it is worth noting that his company conveniently supplied the bricks for a good deal of that construction—at a profit). A lifelong Presbyterian and notoriously straitlaced, English used his time in office to run petty thieves out of town and shutter gambling operations, dramatically burning gambling dens' furnishings in the streets. In 1906, Captain English, still vigorous at almost seventy years of age, had recently stepped down from serving as head of the city's police commission, a post he had held for years.

As one of the founders of the Atlanta Terminal Company, English was a driving force in construction of the grand Terminal Station, through which passenger trains from six rail companies passed. The captain, known for his ramrod straight posture and reserved, dignified manner, surprised and delighted Atlanta crowds at the station's grand opening when he marched



Atlanta's post-war growth depicted in a souvenir postcard showing the city in 1864, 1889, and 1905.

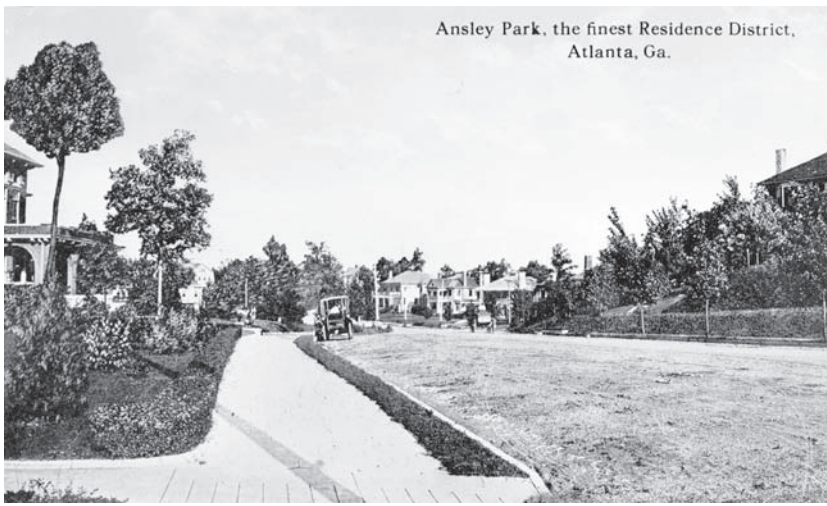
at the head of a parade playing "Dixie" and tossed his straw Panama hat in the air in time to the music. In a step beyond already rigid Jim Crow laws controlling racial interaction, Terminal Station not only had separate waiting rooms for black and white passengers, but also had separate entrances and exits.

Captain English married his childhood sweetheart, Emily Alexander, the year after the war ended, and they had six children: James Warren Jr., Harry, Emily, Jenny, Edgar, and Edward. The Captain and Emily lived in their red brick house on Cone Street in downtown Atlanta for close to forty years. Although his sons and daughters urged their parents to move to one of the fashionable new sections of Peachtree Street or luxurious developments like Ansley Park, Emily English insisted on remaining downtown, saying that she knew that if she lived close to the center city businesses her men could come home for dinner each day.

★★★

In the forty years since English had come back to Georgia from the battlefront, Atlanta had remade herself. The little railway terminal town of fewer than ten thousand residents laid waste by war had evolved by 1906 into the so-called Gate City of the South, hustling and bustling with tens of thousands of newcomers, all eager to reinvent themselves, too.

The city's population had exploded, almost tripling over a quarter century, increasing from just fewer than 37,000 in 1880 to 115,000 in 1906. Some of those newcomers were Yankee opportunists but most were southerners, like English, drawn by the commercial promise of Atlanta's transportation and manufacturing centers. Black and white, from rural farms and plantations, or from smaller towns left impoverished by war, southerners crowded into Atlanta, which saw its number of businesses more than quadruple between 1880 and 1900.



Homes in north Atlanta's Ansley Park, 1907. Courtesy, Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, ful0391.

Captain James W. English's Fourth National Bank Building.

Now the city was a hive of commercial activity and one by one, its dusty, red-clay roads were being paved, turned into wide streets where horses, streetcars, carriages—and a few automobiles—vied for passage. In downtown Atlanta, office buildings, hotels, grand residences, and monumental churches lined these thoroughfares. Like cities in the Northeast and Midwest, Atlanta saw a flurry of construction in the early 1900s as architects developed techniques allowing them to build taller and taller structures, such as Fourth National Bank's sixteen-story tower.

Walking out of the lobby of Fourth National, one could head next door to a more modest, adjoining business, Jacob's Pharmacy, where the brain

tonic called Coca-Cola, concocted by Atlanta druggist John Pemberton, had first been served as a fountain drink. Pemberton had peddled his medicinal syrup at drugstores across Atlanta, but it was Joseph Jacobs who first mixed the tonic with soda water, creating a carbonated drink that customers downed on the spot.

Even before he served Coca-Cola tonic with the added fizz of soda water, Jacobs had earned a reputation as a business maverick. When he came to Atlanta from Philadelphia in the 1870s, he was the first merchant to offer "cut-rate prices," such as 28¢ or $1.97. Such pricing was radical because pennies had not been used in Atlanta—or anywhere in the South—after the Civil War. Jacobs ordered three thousand pennies from Washington, D.C., so he could make change when customers purchased his discount merchandise. Once those pennies circulated in Atlanta, other shop owners began to offer gimmicky prices, too.[3]

From the soda fountain at Jacob's Pharmacy, the fizzy drink made with Pemberton's tonic grew in popularity. Twenty years later Coca-Cola signs sprouted everywhere and Pemberton's secret formula had become the cornerstone of a business that had made many Atlantans rich. No one had earned more from Coca-Cola than Asa Griggs Candler, another one-time druggist. Although he had only a few years of formal schooling, Candler taught himself the pharmacy trade, and was a successful manufacturer of medicines, developing his own drugs and buying other patents. In 1888, Candler had put together a business partnership to buy out Pemberton. He then proceeded to buy out his own partners, becoming the sole proprietor of Coca-Cola.

Candler, a wiry and energetic man whose loud confidence belied his tiny five-foot-six frame and high-pitched voice, proceeded to market and advertise the cola in a way that had never been seen before. He quickly changed the image of the product from a "brain tonic" to a refreshing drink bottled using the carbonated blend made popular at Jacob's Pharmacy. He crafted ads featuring curvaceous young women sipping the drink, including the actress and model Hilda Clark, who was also featured in a popular Coca-Cola calendar. Candler made the Coca-Cola logo ubiquitous, hand-

Asa Candler, shown with his family around 1900. Courtesy, Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, dek436-85.

ing out paper fans, stickers, clocks, and other gewgaws featuring the distinctive curvy script. By the early 1900s, Coca-Cola was sold in every state in the country, and had outlets in Canada, Cuba, and Mexico.

Candler appointed his son, Charles Howard, to be vice president of Coca-Cola in 1906, and directed some of his energy into other projects, the chief of which was the construction of a self-named building that would be the tallest skyscraper in Atlanta yet, a seventeen-story structure at the intersection of Peachtree and Houston streets. Marble relief carvings covered its walls, depicting such disparate icons as Shakespeare, Beethoven, and Benjamin Franklin—as well as Candler's parents. Its cornerstone contained a Bible, copies of Atlanta newspapers, and a bottle of Coca-Cola. Candler, a flamboyant self-promoter who always wore a frock coat no matter how stifling the southern weather, had opened the Peachtree Street entrance of his grand skyscraper with some fanfare in January 1906, and Atlantans attending the sneak preview gaped at the exotic Turkish baths

facility in the basement, the elaborate central cooling and vacuum-cleaning systems, and the intricately ornamented elevators and lobby.

As construction on the building continued throughout 1906, Candler busily signed tenants for the many stories of office space in the impressive new structure. He filled the enormous ground floor offices with his trademark bravado; when he couldn't find a grand enough tenant, he simply created one, Central Bank and Trust Corporation.

Candler's building promised to be the most magnificent the city had yet seen, but as Atlanta's boosters quickly pointed out, it was hardly the first skyscraper. Occupying the oddly shaped block at Peachtree, Broad, and Poplar streets, architect Bradford Gilbert designed the outrageous triangular, eleven-story, $200,000 "flat iron" skyscraper commissioned by the

Candler Building, early 1900s. Geographic Places Collection, Atlanta Area Photographs, Special Collections Department & Archives, Georgia State University Library.

Peachtree Street, around 1910. The tall building center left is the Flatiron Building, behind which is the Piedmont Hotel. The Candler Building is the tallest building on the right. Courtesy, Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-134707.

English-American Company in 1897.[4] Just across the street, Hoke Smith and his partners had opened the Piedmont Hotel in 1903. A lavish affair with ornate metalwork decorations, the hotel became the prime gathering space for upper-class white Atlantans and the destination of visiting politicians and performers.

"Steel and stone skyscrapers have shot up in rapid succession and the heart of the city looks like the lower part of Manhattan," wrote Clarence Weaver in the introduction to his 1906 souvenir book, *Atlanta: Up to Date Gate City of the South.* "There is no other city in the South that has the metropolitan appearance Atlanta presents."[5]

★★★

If you took a right-hand turn when going out the Houston Street exit of the Candler Building, and headed two blocks east, you'd reach Courtland Street. Go a block south, and you'd hit Auburn Avenue. Take a left and keep on heading east, and you'd walk through a section of the city that would have been as startlingly inconceivable in antebellum Atlanta as the gleaming luxury of the towers rising on Peachtree Street.

In the modest, wooden building at 184 Auburn Avenue, Georgia's first black pharmacist, Moses Amos, operated Gate City Drug Store, where his staff of six tended to brisk business. As a child, Amos had attended the historic Storr's School, established by northern missionaries long before Atlanta offered public education to blacks. While a teen he apprenticed

Moses Amos, Georgia's first black pharmacist, proprietor of Gate City Store, circa 1900. Courtesy, Auburn Avenue Research Library.

under white pharmacist J. C. Huss, who later paid for his former trainee's tuition at Atlanta University. Huss eventually sold his pharmacy business to Amos and his partners, Thomas Heathe Slater and H. R. Butler, black medical doctors who were both originally from North Carolina.[6]

Gate City Drug Store, with a lunch counter in one corner and a post office in the other, served as a busy gathering place for working- and middle-class black Atlantans. Amos, a member of the National Negro Business League, was a prominent member of the black business and civic community. With his close-cropped hair and long, bushy handlebar mustache, Amos, a stocky five-foot-eight, cut a dashing figure. His wife, Emma, starred in their social circle as a gracious entertainer.

By 1906, Amos was no longer the only black pharmacist in Atlanta. His Gate City Drug Store faced competition from J. F. McDougald, another black North Carolinian, who ran an eponymous pharmacy at Houston and Auburn Avenue. McDougald was described in Clarence Weaver's guidebook as "the well known colored practitioner in this city."[7]

Just a few doors down from Amos's shop, Gus Williams owned and operated the Piedmont Ice Cream Store, the only such business catering solely to black clients. In advertisements in the black-owned and operated *Atlanta Independent* newspaper, Williams reminded patrons that his was the only store in Atlanta that offered them a chance to sample sophisticated frozen treats including limes and sherbets as well as ice cream. Likewise, Charles "Charley" Moseley, who ran the Vendome lounge on Ivy Street, touted his services, which included transmission of baseball scores directly to the saloon, so customers could keep tabs on their teams while running up tabs at the bar. The Vendome, Moseley advertised, was the only place where black Atlantans could try the "champagne cocktail," a fashionable New York drink.[8]

Further along Auburn Avenue, a thoroughfare that would later earn the name "the richest Negro street in America," was the People's Shoe Store, co-owned by George Montgomery "Mont" Howell and his brother, Edward. From this storefront, Mont, who had financed his education at Atlanta University by running a cleaning, pressing, and mending service

Henry Rucker, Georgia region Internal Revenue Service officer. Courtesy, Auburn Avenue Research Library.

for fellow students, operated a tailoring business, while Edward custom-crafted shoes.

The most notable structure in the black business district was the office building on Auburn Avenue that had been erected in 1904 by Henry Rucker, a former slave who, since 1897 had served as head of the Internal Revenue Service's Georgia region, overseeing a staff of a hundred employees, 90 percent of whom were white. As slaves, Rucker and his parents were owned by *Atlanta Constitution* managing editor Henry W. Grady's father-in-law, William King. After emancipation they moved to Atlanta, where Rucker first worked, like his father, as a plasterer, then used his earnings to invest in businesses and real estate. Rucker's office building was occupied by black doctors and dentists.[9]

Moses Amos, Gus Williams, and the Howell brothers could be confident of a growing customer base. Roughly 40 percent of Atlanta's popula-

tion was black, and these 45,000 residents included a burgeoning middle class, fueled by graduates of the city's black colleges and seminaries and entrepreneurs from other states, lured by Atlanta's reputation as a good place to get ahead.

The sizable black population and the infrastructure of schools, churches, and social organizations made business easier for the entrepreneurs on Auburn Avenue than it might have been in other southern cities, but the Atlanta community felt the growing pressure of Jim Crow laws that regulated interracial interaction and placed tight controls on black businesses, neighborhoods, and social institutions. Amos had already had to scale back his business once—a surge of growth had been followed by creditors closing in, forcing Gate City Drug to move from a larger location to its current spot. Likewise, tailor Mont Howell, who had once owned a grand shop on Peachtree Street, could not recoup coverage from his insurers following a fire, and had no choice but to reopen on a smaller scale.

Such setbacks motivated many black Atlantans to circumvent white banks and insurers and start their own financial organizations. Alonzo Herndon, a former slave who built a fortune through owning and operating barbershops that catered to a white clientele, founded Atlanta Mutual Life Insurance in 1905, offering insurance to black customers and allowing them to circumvent discriminatory white agencies.

Herndon's flagship barbershop at 66 Peachtree Street, just down from the Candler Building, was considered the city's finest. Through the gleaming plate-glass windows, passersby could glimpse the dazzling chandeliers, the gleaming rows of mahogany barber chairs, the fine marble fixtures, and Herndon's dapper staff, outfitted in white shirts and bow ties.[10]

Herndon's magnificent shop symbolized the startling dissonance between the oppression of Jim Crow and the entrepreneurial spirit of Atlanta. Herndon catered to an upscale white clientele, offering the most intimate of services—shaves, haircuts, grooming, and even bathing facilities. His customers nonchalantly accepted the ministrations of Herndon and his staff—and paid well for the treatments. But while they interacted casually with the black staff at Herndon's, they would never tolerate black clients

sitting alongside them in the barber chairs or heading to a steam bath. Herndon's Peachtree Street shop was "white only." Successful businessmen such as Moses Amos, Gus Williams, and Henry Rucker would not have been able to walk through its front doors.

★★★

Although the central thoroughfares of Atlanta indicated a hustling modern city with bright lights, noisy motorcars, roaring trains, and clusters of cabs, one did not have to venture far off of Peachtree, Whitehall, or Forsyth to encounter the shanties and cramped tenement buildings that housed Atlanta's working class—both black and white. In slums with colorful nicknames like "Beaver Slide" and "Pig Alley," black Atlantans lived in tiny one-story wooden houses. Few homes had electricity, and fewer still had water or sewer service. Cramped conditions and poor sanitation contributed to Atlanta's high mortality rates; according to the 1900 census, in that year 292 residents died of "diarrhearial disease," 189 of pneumonia, and 300 of consumption—the three leading causes of death.[11]

Many poor and working-class whites clustered in the "company towns" adjoining the city's cotton mills and manufacturing plants. Near the Fulton Cotton and Bag Mill (of which Captain English was a board member), workers, some of them resettled from Appalachia, crowded into one-room wooden houses, two-story tenements, and shotgun shacks constructed by the mill company. The community became known as Cabbagetown and was controlled almost entirely by the manufacturing company.[12] The mill families worked long hours in the factory, which produced a number of products including bags used to ship cotton from the South to the North.

Cotton still figured critically in Atlanta's economy in 1906. Although most cotton-related businesses in the city were concerned with shipping, packaging, or trading the fiber, cotton also was farmed nearby; just outside the city limits, cotton fields stretched for miles through DeKalb County. Sharecroppers—black and white—worked farms just beyond the streetcar

Harvesting cotton in DeKalb County, a suburb of Atlanta, 1906. Courtesy, Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, dek184-85.

lines. Large tracts of farmland spread south of the city around Lakewood, where the Poole family lived, and near Oakland, where John Kimmel, and his wife, Knowles, had moved from Pennsylvania. Like so many newcomers to Atlanta, the Kimmels came to the city looking for a way to get ahead.

★★★

Radiating from downtown, streetcar lines connected the disparate communities within Atlanta's limits and extended beyond to the suburbs. The Edgewood rail line, heading east from downtown, first passed through black neighborhoods of the city's Fourth Ward, then reached the Ward's white fringes, at Jackson Street, where the accountant and board of education member, Eugene Mitchell, lived with his family, including precocious five-year-old daughter Margaret.[13]

When the trolley line crossed Waddell, it indicated the unofficial border

of Inman Park, the city's first planned suburb and home to developers Joel Hurt and Samuel Inman. Residents erected ornate mansions along carefully kept streets that centered on parkland designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, the visionary behind New York City's Central Park. Resident Asa Candler built a magnificent home at 61 Elizabeth Street and donated land for the construction of a handsome stone Methodist church in the neighborhood. The most exclusive community in 1906 Atlanta, Inman Park was pricey; a new seven-room, three-bath home, complete with front piazza, was for sale at $5,250—compared to $3,000 for a seven-room home on Rawson Street, in the southern section of downtown. In Annie Laurie Poole's neighborhood of Lakewood Heights, a four-room cottage and land could be had for just $1,200. Edward Ansley, a real-estate developer who lived in Decatur, was challenging Joel Hurt's Inman Park with a new suburban development, which Ansley vowed would be the city's most luxurious. In the summer of 1906, Ansley was still auctioning off lots in Ansley Park, a subdivision of stately homes erected along winding streets. The development adjoined Piedmont Park, the enormous expanse of green space (complete with lake) that the city had acquired from a private club in 1905.[14]

In 1901, four years after moving to Atlanta, sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois gave a presentation to the American Political Science Association on the interaction of white and black southerners. Du Bois noted that while poorer black and white southerners often lived near each other, "one thing, however seldom occurs. The best of whites and the best of Negroes almost never live in anything like close proximity."[15]

In 1906 Atlanta, the elite of both races rarely interacted. As upper-class whites moved north and east of downtown to areas like Inman Park and Ansley Park, wealthier blacks moved west of the city to the area around the Atlanta University campus and south, where the black neighborhood of Brownsville developed.

Built on one of the highest points in Atlanta, often called "Diamond Hill," the Atlanta University campus was set off from the rest of the city, an enclave where students and professors could be free from the restrictions of Jim Crow laws.

Brownsville was a community of fifteen hundred residents, many of them homeowners. The residents funded their own school, frequented a post office run by black postmaster Luther Price, shopped at stores owned and run by their neighbors, and attended one of three community churches. Dr. William Penn, a Yale-educated medical doctor, lived in the neighborhood, and his house at 90 Ridge Avenue was considered one of the finest owned by a black Atlantan. Brownsville adjoined the campuses of Gammon Theological Seminary and Clark College, and one of the leading residents was John Wesley Edward Bowen, a professor of theology at Gammon, who in 1906 was named the school's first black president. W. E. Bowen, as he was known, lived with his wife, Ariel, and children, Irene and John Wesley Jr., near the residence halls of Gammon.[16]

In 1906, other new residential developments, while less exclusive than Ansley Park and Inman Park, marked a wave of white, middle-class efforts at segregation. Developers positioned these new areas as havens from the noise and congestion of the urban center, and away from the tenement housing crowded with blacks and Greek and Jewish immigrants. A subdivision, Nor'west, under construction during the summer of 1906 west of the intersection of Peachtree Street and North Avenue, advertised itself as just four miles from the Candler Building and city skyscrapers, with homesites starting at one hundred dollars and "No Lots Sold to Negroes."[17]

4

The Truck Farmer's Wife

> "If the right negro had been caught and identified, there probably would have been no need for a court of justice."
> —*Atlanta Constitution*, August 16, 1906

Georgia Hembree and her husband, Richard, lived about a mile beyond Battle Hill, an area southwest of downtown Atlanta that had been the site of some of the fiercest fighting during the Civil War. Richard earned his living as a truck farmer, an occupation whose quaintly antiquated name simply meant he grew vegetables and plants to be traded at market, allowing him to "have truck" by bartering with other vendors.[1]

The Hembree place was not too far from Georgia's parents' home, and early on the morning of August 15, while the air was still cool, she left the truck farm to go visit her mother. The route took her through a desolate wooded stretch, but she'd taken the path often, and in the quiet morning she was unworried.

As she entered the thickest part of the woods, a black man approached her from the opposite direction. She wasn't alarmed; she was used to seeing farmhands around. But as the man grew close, he demanded her purse. She gave it to him; it contained two dollars. But then, she said, the man grabbed her and dragged her into the deeper woods, choking her with his bare hands and trying to force her to the ground to rape her. She fought back fiercely and the man ran away.

Georgia Hembree ran back to her home and told Richard what had

happened. He called neighbors and they formed a posse. The men brought bloodhounds and spread out over Battle Hill pursuing the attacker.

The vigilantes brought a first suspect back to the house, but Mrs. Hembree said he was not the guilty man. Over the rest of the day, posses arrested six more men. Rather than bother Mrs. Hembree again, they took the captives downtown. Two were locked in the Tower and four in the police station, all awaiting identification.

★★★

Two days after Mrs. Hembree reported her attack, Charles Daniel, editor of the *Atlanta Evening News,* decided to appeal directly to white men's chivalrous pride—and their pocketbooks. "It is an alarming state of affairs," he wrote in an August 17 editorial, when white women "have been brutally, viciously and terribly attacked, fought and assaulted by black hearted devils who roam at large in this community."[2]

It was obvious, Daniel stated, that the understaffed Fulton County police force could not patrol the area adequately. This left women and girls like Georgia Hembree and Annie Laurie Poole who lived in outlying areas such as Battle Hill and Lakewood particularly vulnerable. Until the county came up with more officers, citizens should be encouraged to patrol their own communities. As an incentive for vigilant protection of the white women, Daniel proposed that a reward pool of one thousand dollars be created to compensate citizens who captured suspected rapists. The *News*, he boasted, already had contributed one hundred dollars to start the fund.

To spur donations, Daniel printed the names of "prominent, prosperous and wealthy citizens" whom he said *should* contribute to the cause; for the casual reader, the list implied that the noted citizens were already participants in the plan. The names on the list included *Journal* editor James Gray, F. M. Inman, Henry Grady Jr., Howell Cloud, former chamber of commerce president Robert Maddox, Walter Andrews, and E. R. DuBose.

In bold, uppercase letters, Daniel exclaimed: "THE PATRIOTIC

WHITE MEN, THE LOYAL SOUTHERNERS IN WHOSE VEINS FLOWS THE BLOOD OF 'DIXIE LAND,' WILL RISE IN THEIR INDIGNATION AND STOP THESE CRIMES BEFORE HIGH HEAVEN."

A slim, clean-shaven young man with intense, bright eyes, Daniel had become top editor of the *News* in late 1905 after a coup of sorts in which he and other directors of the newspaper ousted the previous chief editor, John Temple Graves. Daniel, who had been managing editor prior to moving to the top of the *News* masthead, now served as editor and general manager as well as on the board of directors. The *News'* president was James W. English Jr., the well-connected son of Captain English. Other board members included attorney Charles Hopkins, whose clients included Atlanta University and English's younger brother, Harry. Stockholders included R. M. Rose of the Rose Medicinal Whiskey company, and Arnold Broyles, clerk of Fulton County Superior Court.[3]

Although control of the *News* had been wrested from John Temple Graves, the former editor was not without a platform for long. With his stentorian voice and stately presence, Graves had established a national reputation as an orator and essayist and his segregationist views were widely known. In April 1906, backed by Fred Seely, a newcomer from New Jersey, Graves launched the *Atlanta Georgian,* and went head-to-head against the *News.*[4]

Graves was entrenched in Atlanta's publishing community. Before working at the *News,* he had edited the *Journal* in the 1880s. In 1889, he delivered a moving speech at *Constitution* managing editor Henry W. Grady's memorial service. Graves, famous for the lofty and ornate language of his speeches, brought the same style to his editorials at the *Georgian*.[5]

Despite the contrasting personalities of their editors, the *News* and *Georgian* had more similarities than differences. Both were evening tabloids loaded with sensational stories, lurid photographs and engravings, and plenty of provocative — often-vitriolic — race-baiting editorials that frequently ran on the front page.

On the day that he called for creation of a permanent reward fund for citizen capture of would-be rapists, Daniel ran another editorial that left no doubt about his sympathies toward vigilante justice.

In an article headlined "All Honor to South Carolina!" Daniel and the *News* described a case in Greenwood, South Carolina, in which a black man, Bob Davis, had been captured by a posse and identified by a young girl, Jennie Brooks, as the person who had attacked and attempted to rape her. A posse took Davis to the roadside where Brooks said the attack had happened, with plans of killing him there. When they reached the spot, they were met by Governor Duncan Heyward, who pleaded with them to let Davis have a trial.

"But these determined South Carolinians had had some experience with the delays, technicalities, appeals and defeat of justice in the courts," wrote Daniel, turning again to capital letters for emphasis. "NONE OF THAT FOR THEM IN THIS CASE, AND THEY LYNCHED THE NEGRO ON THE SPOT."

There was no doubt Daniel intended for the pair of editorials to establish a clear connection between southern male "patriotism" and extralegal executions. Praising the actions of the South Carolina lynch mob, Daniel concluded: "Today South Carolina stands at the forefront of Southern patriotism in this hour. Tomorrow, Georgia may claim the honor."[6]

5

Harpers Ferry

> "Mr. Washington's cult has gained unquestioning followers, his work has wonderfully prospered, his friends are legion, and his enemies are confounded."
> —W. E. B. DU BOIS, *The Souls of Black Folks*, 1903

As he packed for the journey from Atlanta to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, J. Max Barber, the zealous young coeditor of *Voice of the Negro,* knew he would be helping to make history. He would be joining an Atlanta contingent of W. E. B. Du Bois supporters headed to the second conference of the Niagara Movement.

A summer earlier, Barber had traveled with Du Bois to the first Niagara Movement meeting, a gathering of black intellectuals and leaders during which Du Bois outlined a radical mission: to organize and protest the accommodationist stance on race relations advocated by Booker T. Washington.[1]

For the past decade, Washington had been regarded by most white newspaper editors, politicians, and educators as the national spokesman for the black race, a position awarded following his "Atlanta Compromise" speech delivered at the Cotton States Exposition of 1895. In the famous speech, Washington assured whites that they and black southerners could maintain a mutual distance while striving for communal economic benefit. Holding up his hand as he addressed the crowd on that sweltering

Atlanta University professor W. E. B. Du Bois. Courtesy, Library of Congress, LC-B2-1369-16.

September day, Washington declared, "In all things purely social we can be as separate as the five fingers, and yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." Almost a decade after giving that speech, Washington, a former slave who had lived through the seismic social shifts in the South after the end of the Civil War, continued to advocate cautious interaction between the races.[2]

Du Bois and Washington had once been allies. After Washington delivered "Atlanta Compromise," Du Bois sent him a congratulatory telegram, lauding his "phenomenal success," and joining the praise given by Clark Howell of the *Constitution* and white newspaper editors and politicians nationwide. In 1901, Du Bois helped Washington launch the National Negro Business League.[3]

But Du Bois grew impatient with Washington's willingness to accept social, residential, commercial, and educational subordination and resisted Washington's tacit acceptance of segregation. He bristled at Washington's Tuskegee Institute's focus on technical and agricultural training. In 1903,

Booker T. Washington. Courtesy, Auburn Avenue Research Library.

Du Bois's simmering frustration boiled over, and he took aim at Washington in a scathing essay included in his treatise *The Souls of Black Folk*. "Mr. Washington," he wrote, "represents in Negro thought the old attitude of adjustment and submission." Washington's emphasis on industrial education, Du Bois claimed, amounted to admission that "the Negro can survive only through submission." Washington, Du Bois wrote, "distinctly asks that black people give up, at least for the present, three things: first, political power; second, insistence on civil rights; third, higher education of Negro youth."[4]

After issuing that statement, Du Bois continued to criticize Washington. In July 1905, he gathered a couple dozen like-minded critics to discuss opposition to Washington's accommodationist stance. The gathering of twenty-nine black leaders was an almost clandestine affair, held in a home on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls. The creation of the Niagara Movement firmly cemented Du Bois's stance against Washington. In a photograph taken at that inaugural Niagara Falls meeting, Barber posed

with Du Bois. Also appearing in the photograph were Atlanta entrepreneur Alonzo Herndon and his eight-year-old son, Norris.

Du Bois espoused the concept of the "talented tenth," a conviction that the most educated and enterprising blacks would lift up the rest of the race. If these elite leaders could achieve positions of power and have equality with whites, Du Bois said, the effect would be to improve the situation for all blacks in the country.

After the 1905 formation of the Niagara Movement, black academics, newspaper editors, clergy and business leaders had begun slowly—and in most cases, subtly—to separate into two divisions: a very large group of conservative, probusiness, accommodationist thinkers fell in line behind Washington, and a small camp of militant, prointellectual integrationists declared support for Du Bois.

Now, in August 1906, as he prepared for the second Niagara Movement meeting, Du Bois made his mission public and actively recruited members who considered themselves members of that "talented tenth." A first bold move was planning the session at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, the famous site of abolitionist John Brown's bloody 1859 raid. In press releases announcing the event, the organizers highlighted the timing of the meeting: on the hundred-year anniversary of Brown's birth. They touted Harpers Ferry as "one of the most beautiful and picturesque spots in America," and pointed out that the Storer College meeting place was within walking distance of the "John Brown Fort" and that pilgrimages to the Battle of Osawatomie would be part of the conference—along with tennis, boating, and other leisure activities. Du Bois's announcement declared: "All friends of the cause of the Full, Civil, and Political Rights of the Negro are welcome."[5]

★★★

Washington, known as the "Wizard of Tuskegee," advocated uplift through hard work, thrift, and clean living, a philosophy shaped by his dramatic life experiences. The son of a slave, whose only encounter with education

had been carrying his master's children's books, Washington had, after Emancipation, learned to read between shifts in a coal mine. He paid for his education at the Hampton Institute in Virginia by working as a janitor. He financed the development and operations of his acclaimed industrial institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, through a combination of manual labor, agricultural savvy, and eloquent fundraising speeches. A powerfully built man with strong features and skin weathered from years of toiling in the fields of the Tuskegee Institute, Washington, now in his fifties, still worked in his garden and kept hogs.

Du Bois, a New England native educated in public elementary schools, a student of sociology in Germany, a graduate of Fisk, and the first black awarded a PhD by Harvard, decried Washington's "Tuskegee Method" with its emphasis on manual and domestic labor. A professor of sociology at Atlanta University, Du Bois advocated higher education as the route to social and political equality, writing in his characteristically lofty and classics-infused style: "The riddle of existence is the college curriculum that was laid before the Pharaohs, that was taught in the groves by Plato, that formed the trivium and quadrivium, and is today laid before the freedmen's sons at Atlanta University."[6]

Both men were brilliant writers and orators, and in the tradition of skilled politicians and preachers, they drew from their personal histories. In their autobiographies, each included a particularly telling childhood anecdote.

As a child, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was one of a handful of black residents in the town of Great Barrington, Massachusetts. In *Souls*, he recalled the incident that first made him realize how his skin color set him apart from his fellow children. The students in the "wee, wooden schoolhouse" he attended took it upon themselves to buy and exchange visiting cards, and the young W. E. Burghardt was crushed when a white girl declined his card with just a scornful glance. He recognized, "with a certain suddenness" that he would always be considered, "different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and long, but shut out from their world by a vast veil."[7]

The young Booker was also shaped by an encounter with young white girls—but of a completely different nature from that of Du Bois's school days experience. Washington spent his early childhood in the one-room, dirt-floor cabin that also served as the cookhouse for the plantation and often was summoned to the plantation owner's house to cool the master's guests by operating a hand fan. One afternoon, standing in the hot yard in an unbearably scratchy homespun shirt, he fanned his two young mistresses and their friends as they shared a snack of ginger cakes. He recalled that he "then and there resolved that, if I ever got free, the height of my ambition would be reached if I could get to the point where I could secure and eat ginger cakes in the way that I saw those ladies doing."[8]

In the intervening years, Washington had not only eaten ginger cakes but also dined with Queen Victoria and president William Howard Taft, received an honorary degree from Du Bois's alma mater, Harvard, and attended hundreds of dinners in cities across the United States, speaking to businessmen, ministers, and educators, about the Tuskegee Method and his life story. Despite his legendary experiences and dramatically changed circumstances, Washington kept the memories of his childhood deprivation close. "I rarely take part in one of these long dinners, that I do not wish that I could put myself back in the little cabin where I was a slave boy, and again through the experience there—one that I shall never forget—of getting molasses to eat once a week from the 'big house,'" he wrote in *Up from Slavery*. "My share of the syrup was usually about two tablespoonfuls, and those two spoonfuls of molasses were much more enjoyable to me than is a fourteen-course dinner after which I am to speak."[9]

★★★

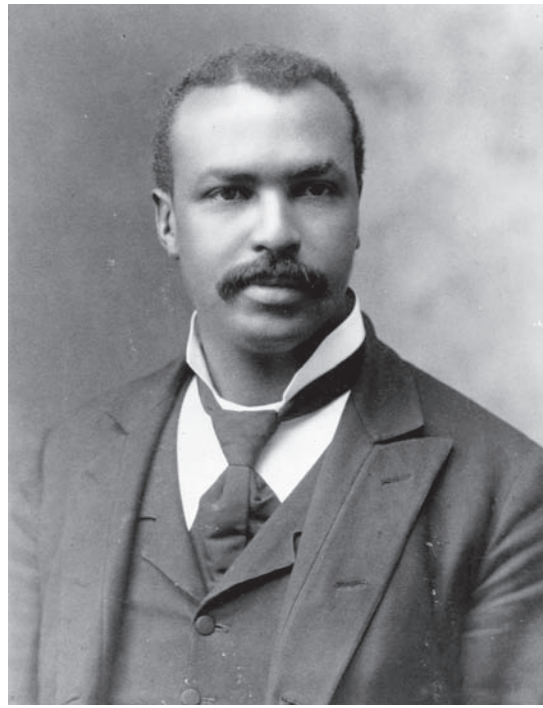
In Atlanta, where Du Bois was based as a professor and Washington had many loyal adherents in the business community, the schism between the two leaders was particularly acute.

In the Du Bois camp were his fellow Atlanta University faculty members George Towns and Adrienne Herndon, director of the university's

John and Lugenia Hope and their family, around 1900. Courtesy, Auburn Avenue Research Library.

drama program. The only black college president to openly support Du Bois was John Hope, named head of Atlanta Baptist College (later known as Morehouse College) in 1906. The child of a freed slave and a Scottish businessman, Hope was an early proponent of black civil rights and indeed had taken a stand against Washington even earlier than Du Bois, publicly criticizing the "Atlanta Compromise" speech in 1896. At Atlanta Baptist, Hope implemented a curriculum of liberal arts study and shied away from a Tuskegee-style focus on agricultural and industrial training. Hope's wife, Lugenia Burns Hope, was as socially active as her husband, and established the Gate City Free Kindergarten Association in 1904.

Adrienne's husband, Alonzo, despite attending the first session of the Niagara Movement and posing in the famous photograph, did not further



Reverend Henry Hugh Proctor, pastor of Atlanta's First Congregational Church, circa. 1899-1900. Courtesy, Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-124662.

publicly support Du Bois. However, despite repeated entreaties, he refused to take an active role in Washington's Business League. Likewise, several other leading black Atlantans did not cement a firm alliance with either Du Bois or Washington, but worked with both men. For instance, Henry Hugh Proctor, the charismatic pastor of First Congregational Church, sat with Washington's wife in the audience during the "Atlanta Compromise" speech, and regularly lectured at Tuskegee. But Proctor, whose congregation included a number of Du Bois supporters such as Towns and Adrienne Herndon, also worked with members of the Niagara Movement and in late 1905 hosted a conference that Du Bois had organized.[10]

W. E. Bowen, the president of Gammon Theological Seminary and co-editor of the *Voice of the Negro*, was, like his counterpart J. Max Barber, definitely in the column of Du Bois supporters by 1906. But Bowen had a long history of collaboration with Washington, having participated in Tuskegee

seminars and hosted Washington in Atlanta. He wrote Washington an 1895 letter praising the "Compromise" speech, saying, "you have done more for the Negro in that speech than in a generation by a thousand political speeches." Bowen was also an active member of the National Negro Business League.[11]

Du Bois scathingly criticized the commercial striving of Washington's Business League and Atlanta's entrepreneurial business owners and professionals. "Atlanta must not lead the South to dream of material prosperity as the touchstone of all success," he cautioned in *Souls*. "What if the Negro people be wooed from a strife for righteousness, from a love of knowing, to regard dollars as the be-all and end-all of life?"[12]

Proponents of prosperity and supporters of Washington were numerous in Atlanta, and included pharmacist Moses Amos, tailor "Mont" Howell, and Henry Rucker, the Georgia tax officer appointed by President McKinley. Editor Benjamin Jefferson Davis publicized pro-Washington views in his weekly newspaper, the *Atlanta Independent*.[13]

Davis, active in the Odd Fellows fraternal order (of which the *Independent* was the official organ) and a voting delegate of Georgia's Republican Party, vehemently disparaged Barber and Du Bois's lack of participation in local politics, and publicly berated them for failing to register as voters. A graduate of Atlanta University, Davis had supported himself as a bricklayer and contractor, and shared Washington's convictions—based on personal experience—that a combination of education and manual labor was important to getting ahead. Davis was outspoken and, in the minds of some of Atlanta's middle-class black community, still a little rough around the edges.[14]

Scoffing at Du Bois's 1906 declaration that the Niagara Movement meeting was open to "friends of the cause of Full Civil and Political Rights," an *Independent* editorial asserted, "If what a man practices is any evidence of what he stands for among his neighbors, or what he believes in, we think the very invitation excludes Professor Du Bois," going on to taunt Du Bois for failing to pay poll taxes or register, leaving him "practically disenfranchised."[15]

Davis' accusation of Du Bois could have been based on information supplied by Washington. In March of 1906, Washington sent a confidential letter to ally Henry Rucker, the Georgia revenue collector, asking if he could find out whether a number of Atlantans—including Du Bois, Max Barber, W. E. Bowen, George Towns, Alonzo Herndon, and John Hope—had "met the conditions for voting in way of paying poll taxes, etc."[16]

The timing of the Harpers Ferry meeting—ten days before Washington's National Negro Business League's annual meeting would open in Atlanta—angered many "Bookerites." For newspaper editor Davis, the split within black leadership meant exposing the community to more white discrimination and oppression. "We must cure ourselves of the cancer gnawing at the vitals of our development before we can successfully combat the white man's prejudice," he wrote. "If we fill our hearts with race pride and brotherly love, and make the interest of the individual that of the race, we will in the ultimatum live down the white man's prejudice; but this cannot be done so long as we are at war with ourselves. We must not spend our energy fighting one another. Our hope is in united action."[17]

★★★

When Du Bois, Barber, and other Atlanta delegates arrived at Harpers Ferry, it was to a dramatically different setting than the previous summer's Niagara meeting. This time, rather than a few dozen men meeting secretly, hundreds of delegates participated, among them dozens of black women, who participated as full members.

On August 17, Du Bois led the attendees on a symbolism-laden march through the cool forests of West Virginia, from the Storer College residences to the ruins of the fort, walking barefoot along the wooded paths. He asked them to commit themselves to supporting the movement's call.

The manifesto issued by Du Bois at the second meeting's end on August 19 constituted a radical call for full political and social equality. Du Bois outlined five demands: full political suffrage; lifting all segregation in pub-

lic facilities, such as rail cars; banning all barriers to movement in cities, business, and travel; equal and fair administration of criminal justice; and full public education for black children.

"We want full manhood suffrage and we want it now," wrote Du Bois in the statement, which was reprinted in the *New York Times* and other newspapers across the country. "We are men! We want to be treated as men. And we shall win."[18]

6

Incident at Copenhill

> "Men who march through the August sun with heavy guns on their shoulders and their belts laden with cartridges through dusty roads and heavy underbrush and woods, mean business."
> —JOE CURTIS, "Week Riding with a Posse," *Atlanta Evening News,* August 23, 1906

Forty years after the Civil War ended, the scars of battle lingered not only in the psyches of Atlantans, but on the terrain of the city itself. Remnants of battle sites were still detectable throughout the growing metropolis. A few miles east of downtown, in the area called Copenhill, old earthen trenches, commonly known as "breastworks," were visible even though the wooded area was dense with tall trees and thick underbrush.

Walter Lawrence, the England-born owner of West View Floral Company on Peachtree Street, moved his wife, Annie, and children from Whitehall Street in the crowded downtown retail district to a new development of homes about a quarter mile from the end of the Copenhill streetcar line. In the summer of 1906, his sister, Ethel, came over from England to visit the Lawrences in their new home, and Walter's fourteen-year-old daughter, Mabel, on summer vacation from Girls High School, spent a good deal of time in her aunt's company.

On the morning of Monday, August 20, Ethel suggested to her niece that they cross the street and head into the woods near the breastworks to gather some of the lush ferns that flourished in the shade of the tall trees

on the hill. At around nine thirty, as the young woman and the teenager worked cutting plants, they heard a sound in the woods. Mabel looked up and saw a black man coming up the hill toward them.[1]

"Your father and brother are not here; I want you both to go right down here with me," he said.[2]

The man reached up and grabbed Mabel by the throat and she seized his wrists, attempting to loosen his grip. Her aunt dashed over to try to help the girl, but the man, keeping one hand clenched on Mabel's neck, used the other to clasp a heavy fallen tree branch which he then swung like a club, hitting Ethel on the head. As the woman reeled back from the impact, the man reached into his pocket and pulled out a length of rope, which he tried to loop around Mabel's throat. As she slipped away, the man turned and threw the rope like a lasso, catching Ethel around the neck. Mabel tried to help her aunt, but she also was hit with the stick.

Mabel collapsed to the ground, yelling, "He has killed me!" and then pretended to be dead. Ignoring her, the man turned his attention to Ethel, and Mabel slipped away unnoticed. She ran to the home of her neighbor, dairy farmer C. W. Hunter, to get help. When she and Mr. Hunter returned to the breastworks, they found Ethel lying blood-covered and unconscious on the old battle site, her right eye almost entirely gouged out of its socket. The attacker had gone.[3]

Mrs. Hunter, in the meantime, called Mrs. Lawrence, who in turn telephoned her husband, doctors, and the police. Then she called as many neighbors as she could reach.

Mr. Hunter carried Ethel to his home. The two doctors who had hurried to the scene attended to her most serious wounds then bundled her into a car and rushed to Wesley Hospital.

Mabel, who had a gash on her head that required twelve stitches to mend, excitedly told her story to her mother and the growing crowd of newspaper reporters and curious neighbors who crowded into the front yard of the Lawrences' house.

By early afternoon, hundreds of men and boys had gathered at the Lawrence home. According to the *Atlanta Evening News,* they were "armed

with shotguns and pistols . . . awaiting impatiently the arrival of bloodhounds." The *News* rushed the story to its afternoon edition and carried an account of the attack as its lead item. In the second paragraph, the *News* asserted: "If the negro is caught, a lynching is deemed inevitable."[4]

★★★

The delay getting dogs to the Lawrence house distressed Charles Daniel, the *News* editor. So the next day, he and the newspaper's president, James English Jr., announced plans to buy a pack of six to ten dogs. They would be known as "The *News* Bloodhounds," kenneled in a central location, and trained to be instantly mobilized "to the scene of any crime that may be committed and promptly put upon the trail of the guilty wretch who outrages our white women."[5]

Daniel and English had already reached into their own wallets the previous week, contributing fifty and one hundred dollars, respectively, toward the reward fund that they had called for after the Hembree incident. They published their contributions on the *News* editorial page.[6]

In the battle for readers' attention, Daniel did more than pledge dollars and dogs toward a blood hunt. He also sent a reporter to ride with the posses searching for the Lawrence attacker. Joe Curtis, a staff writer who usually produced the sports pages, spent four days with the various bands of men and boys traversing Copenhill and environs. "At no time since the close of the Civil War," wrote Curtis, "has there been as many armed men marching through Fulton and adjoining counties in the search for a human being (if he can be called human) as there has been during the past few days."[7]

Curtis supplied *News* readers with a breathless narrative of hundreds of white Atlantans canvassing the area by car, buggy, horseback, foot, and even streetcar, as they hunted for the man described as the assailant by Mabel Lawrence. Curtis's prose whiplashed from hysterical anticipation of a lynching—"making his punishment such that it would be a fearful example to others who entertain such inhuman lusts"—to depiction of the

posse as "calm, collected" citizen law enforcers, who worked with an "army discipline" and had peacefully allowed captured suspects whose innocence was confirmed to go home without incident.

Nonetheless, Curtis made it clear that were a suspect to be caught and subsequently identified by Mabel Lawrence, death would be certain thanks to the "posses of men of various sizes, searching over the surrounding country in the hope of capturing the black fiend and administering the punishment which he so justly deserves."

The posse members' bloodlust was apparent. On Thursday, rumors circulated that a suspect had been arrested and was being brought to Mabel for identification. Armed men converged on the Copenhill area. The *Journal* reported that by ten thirty that night, more than two thousand people had gathered near the Lawrence home, anticipating a lynching.[8]

When nothing happened, most of the crowd left, but at least 150 men camped in the woods of Copenhill hoping to be present when the police finally arrived. In the early dawn hours, they learned that police slipped away through the woods and took the suspect to Decatur. When the news got out, most of the posse hightailed for Decatur, only to learn that the suspect had been taken to the Tower in Atlanta. Their plans for an execution had been thwarted.

★★★

On the night of Thursday, August 23, while the hordes of vigilantes surrounded the Copenhill area, a smaller gang of young white men and boys boarded a streetcar headed from Atlanta to Decatur. They threatened a black man who rode in the car, harassing him until he fled from the trolley for his life. [9]

★★★

On Friday morning, Mittie Waites, an eighteen-year-old schoolteacher, came sprinting to her parents' front door. She had been heading to get wa-

ter from the spring, she said, when a black man sprang out of the woods and tried to attack her. She had run the few hundred yards from the spring to the house, screaming all the way, and almost collapsed as she came inside.

Alerted by Mittie's parents, neighbors ran to the spring, but no one could see the black man. They started to search the woods and fields nearby, while waiting for the county police to arrive.

When officers reached the home, Mittie's father, L. C. Waites, a former deputy at the Fulton County Superior Court, who had recently retired to take up farming in Adamsville, a neighborhood on the southwest side of Atlanta, told them that it was a false alarm. Mittie, he explained, had merely been startled when the man passed on the path to the spring. All the news reports about brutal sexual attacks had put her on edge and that is what had triggered her screaming reaction, her father said. He apologized for the false alarm and urged the officers and his neighbors to calm down.[10]

★★★

That night, a gang of white boys surrounded a young black man of about fifteen years in age. They slapped his face and head and forced him off the streetcar.[11]

★★★

While Joe Curtis roamed DeKalb and Fulton counties with the posses, while neighbors searched the Waites property, and while streetcar attacks broke out in Decatur, *News* editor Charles Daniel escalated his newspaper crusade. On Thursday, August 23, the same evening that thousands of white Atlantans had rushed to the Lawrence family's neighborhood eagerly anticipating a lynching, Daniel's rhetoric took a sinister turn. "By All Means, Organize the Ku Klux Klan," proclaimed the headline of his editorial. The resurgence of the white-capped terror squads of Reconstruction would, he wrote, serve "a highly laudable purpose."[12]

Other papers picked up on Daniel's manufactured news. On the same day that his editorial appeared, the *Journal* ran a front page story under the headline, "Ku Klux to Be Organized Again."

While the most sensational coverage of the Lawrence case ran in the *News* and the *Georgian,* this was not necessarily because the *Journal* and *Constitution* showed more restraint. Rather, it indicated the preoccupation with the Democratic gubernatorial primary that took place on August 22 (just two days after the Lawrence incident). Hoke Smith trounced his competitors in the primary, taking more than 100,000 votes compared to 60,000 cast in total for the four other candidates.

Writing in his journal the night of the election, Walter Foote, co-owner of the Foote & Davies printing company, commented on the resounding victory, "Election today. Hoke Smith got the earth."[13]

In her "Happenings" column in the *Independent* on August 25, Laura Brown, in a break from her usual breezy style, offered this commentary: "The Democratic primary settled it. We had just as well accept the condition and adjust ourselves to the situation."

In a concession editorial in the *Constitution* on August 23, Clark Howell chastised Tom Watson and Hoke Smith for creating a campaign centered on disenfranchising black voters. Enough existing restrictions kept blacks from the polls, wrote Howell, using block capitals to prove his point. "In the end, IT WILL BE THE WHITE MAN WHO WILL BE DISENFRANCHISED, while the negro, now practically disenfranchised in Georgia, becomes the beneficiary of this mad campaign."

★★★

White Atlantans offered the newspaper editors suggestions for thwarting further attacks.

"Let every woman and girl who has the strength to use them keep a weapon constantly upon her person," wrote D. L. Walden of Neal Street to the *Journal.* He offered a helpful tip: pistols and large carving knives might be too cumbersome for the fairer sex, but a small knife would be

more manageable. "If I ever hear of one negro assailant being carved up by [white women], I shall feel richly repaid for offering the suggestion."[14]

Writing to the *News,* Frederick Beers, a clerk in the U.S. District Court and a resident of Holderness Street, advocated a less violent tactic: removing white children from the care of black "mammies." White children, Beers wrote, "should not be disgraced by black hands, teachings, or caressing."

O. White of Piedmont Avenue presented a novel suggestion for using the "protection" funds collected by the *News.* He proposed arming "eight fearless, beardless young men" then disguising them as women and sending them to roam rural areas as decoys, luring sexual predators into the open. "They will be attacked by some brute beyond any doubt," predicted White. Once they'd attracted would-be attackers, the cross-dressing decoys could simply fight back in self-defense. "Slay a few of these black devils on the spot, then our women can go where they please with perfect safety," wrote White.

Polled by the *News,* several white women offered suggestions for quelling what was now being described as a rash of assaults. Mrs. Lucy Peel suggested giving women bottles of "vitriol" which they could throw in the faces of would-be-attackers. Mrs. J. G. Rossman said that, in her opinion, there could be no punishment "too severe for a negro criminal assailant." Mrs. Rossman, originally from the North, said that after moving to Atlanta recently, her sympathies lay with southerners, and she thought no white woman should have to face the humiliation of appearing in court if an outrage occurred. "The black fiends should be punished summarily, and justice should be meted out expeditiously and quickly," she said.[15]

7

Pastor Proctor's Sermon

> "The house in which I discovered what it meant to be a Negro was located on Houston Street, three blocks from the Candler Building."
> —WALTER WHITE, *A Man Called White*

On Sunday, August 26, Reverend Henry Hugh Proctor, pastor of First Congregational Church, delivered a sermon calibrated for political, if not spiritual, effect. The message was not intended so much for the church members sitting in the pews that night, as for the white newspaper editors, to whom he had already sent a copy. Using the text from the second chapter of Genesis, in which Adam declares of Eve, "This is now the bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman," Proctor exhorted his listeners to remember that the protection of womanhood was the duty of all God-fearing men.

Proctor, the handsome, Yale-educated minister of First Congregational Church—known by its members as First Church—was charismatic, smart, and ambitious. Towering at six-foot-four, he took command of any room he entered and was a striking figure as he walked through downtown Atlanta. Shrewdly politically astute, Proctor knew that he needed to do what he could to make it clear to Atlanta's white business, civic, and law-enforcement leaders that the members of his church inhabited a different social sphere from the "vagrants and loafers" suspected of assaulting women in Fulton County.

Members of First Congregational Church, around 1900. Pastor Henry Hugh Proctor is seventh from the left. Courtesy, Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-124911.

In his sermon that Sunday night — delivered as posses still patrolled Copenhill and Charles Daniel continued to call for the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan — Proctor made every effort to underscore the difference between his congregation and the presumed attackers of Ethel Lawrence. The *Constitution* ran highlights under the headline: "Wants Loafers to Work: Rev. H. H. Proctor Preached Sunday on the Recent Attacks on Women by Negroes."[1]

Preached Proctor: "The sentiment of a people centers about their women. Nothing has so made sentiment against the colored race in this country in recent years as the reputation a certain low element of men in the race have acquired for attacking women. Of course, the better element of the race has no agreement whatever with this element, who in every case are ignorant, irresponsible vagabonds: they do not come in touch with our churches and schools, and form no party of the body of the race as a whole."

Proctor repeatedly stressed that the "better element" of black Atlanta had nothing to do with criminals. He called for enforcing laws, cleaning up saloons, and keeping willful young people and "women who prowl the streets bent on evil" out of the city in the evening. He noted that First Church had initiated its own missions into the "slum, suburb, and prison" in efforts to reform lower-class blacks.

"In this hour when the public mind is inflamed, there is need of the cooperation of white and black," Proctor exhorted. "This is no time for suspicion and criticism, but a time when good men of both races should be encouraged and sustained."[2]

★★★

Proctor had moved to Atlanta in 1894 and over the next two decades wooed some of the city's most influential blacks to his church. He liked to point out that its membership included more than a hundred college graduates, including W. B. Matthews, the principal of the Gate City Public School for Colored Children, and Yale alumnus Dr. William Penn. First Church appealed to Atlanta University's students, staff, and faculty, with attendance by heavyweights like W. E. B. Du Bois and his wife Nina, and George Towns, who had degrees from both Atlanta University and Harvard.[3]

With its charming minister and its endowments from the American Missionary Association in the northeast, First Church was, if not the largest congregation in Atlanta's black community, certainly one with major political and financial clout.

Other leading black churches in Atlanta at the time included Wheat Street Baptist Church, pastored by Peter James Bryant; Friendship Baptist Church, led by Edward R. Carter; and Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.), the institution behind Morris Brown College, which, out of the half-dozen Atlanta colleges and seminaries that served black students, was the only one founded by southern blacks, rather than white, northern missionaries.[4]

Proctor, who had been raised in the backwoods of Tennessee, wanted to

make a national name for himself in church circles, and had grand aspirations for First Church. In 1906 he was busy outlining his ambitions for an "institutional" congregation, one that would include clubs, schools, training centers, a theater, and more, serving as a cradle-to-grave community center for its congregants and neighbors. Adept at navigating the political ground between the city's black churches and schools and Atlanta's white leaders, Proctor had, just a few days after the Hembree incident, leveraged white anxieties in an effort to promote his campaign to improve the YMCA designated for blacks—officially named "YMCA (Colored)"—at 132 Auburn Avenue. His letter was printed in the August 19 issue of the *Constitution* and it praised YMCA secretary R. T. Weatherly for his "most wholesome influence over the young colored men and boys in the city" and posited that donating to the program should appeal to all high-minded Atlantans of both races "who are interested in the moral betterment of the negro boys and men in Atlanta."[5]

★★★

One of the leading families in the First Church congregation was headed by George White, a mail carrier for the U.S. Postal Service who lived with his wife and seven children at 101 Houston Street, just a few doors down from the church.

On Sundays, George White insisted that his family follow an unvarying routine. Breakfast. Sunday School. Church. Dinner. Nap (those who weren't sleepy could read the Bible or any novel published twenty-five years ago or earlier; George and his wife, Madeline, decreed that modern literature was not appropriate for the Sabbath). Church—again.

In the mind of their thirteen-year-old son, Walter, breakfast was the highlight of the weekend ritual, which otherwise seemed to stretch tediously long. On Sunday mornings, Madeline served a special meal—yeast rolls with butter, hominy grits, fried chicken or fish, and, on lucky days, slices of Rocky Ford cantaloupe; and when they were less fortunate, stewed prunes or dried apples soaked in water and heated with cinnamon sugar.[6]

Getting to church was easy. The Whites' two-story, wood-frame house was just a stone's throw from First Church, located at the corner of Courtland and Houston. Walter, his brother George Jr., and their five sisters—Madeline, Helen, Olive, Alice, and Ruby—treated the fenced church grounds as their playground, and spent afternoons and evenings there, often with Pastor Proctor's children, who lived in the parsonage that adjoined the church.

During Sunday services, which often went for several hours, Walter found it hard to sit still on the hard wooden pews, but he knew every movement was under scrutiny, not just by his parents, but also by the rest of the congregation. Walter's father and mother were influential members of First Congregational Church; George was a deacon and Madeline was in a prominent clique nicknamed "The Twelve," which included Lugenia Burns Hope, wife of Atlanta Baptist College president John Hope, Annie Rucker, wife of Internal Revenue Service officer Henry Rucker, and Jessie Penn, wife of Dr. William Penn.

The Whites had a wide social circle that included First Church members from both the university and their neighborhood. They had befriended one of George's fellow deacons, John Wesley Dobbs, who was also a postal clerk. Dobbs had just married Irene Thompson that past June. The newlywed couple shared a house on Auburn Avenue, just a few blocks away, with Irene's sister and her husband and their two young sons.

The White household's strict schedule carried over to weekdays, too. Monday was laundry day. Wednesday was for ironing. Making preserves and canning vegetables always took place on Saturday. Madeline, a meticulous housekeeper, put her children to work doing indoor chores and maintaining the outside of their home, one of the few on the street that had painted exterior walls, a whitewashed fence, and carefully tended flower beds.

Although he had to assist his sisters around the house, Walter's main task was helping his father make the mail rounds. Every weekday afternoon from two to seven, Walter helped sort and deliver mail; when he was a little older, he took the reins of the horse-drawn mail cart. Some of his

most enduring childhood memories were set against the backdrop of the postal wagon—the steady clop of the horse's hooves, the scratchy warmth of the heavy canvas mailbags, the tangy scent of the strong glue used to seal envelopes.

Walter's father had started college at Atlanta University, hoping for a future in academia, but, when both of his parents died during his freshman year, George dropped out and took the entrance exam needed to work for the postal service. For more than forty years, he made deliveries, missing only one day of work during his career. Being a postal carrier was not the intellectual life he had envisioned, but it put him in the middle class; at the time Walter and his siblings were growing up, George earned one hundred dollars a month with a twenty-five-dollar allowance for maintaining his horse and wagon.

As an employee of the postal service, George belonged to one of the few racially integrated workforces in 1906 Atlanta. The postmaster deployed black letter carriers like George White to the high-rent business offices and upscale homes of Peachtree Street and the burgeoning suburbs such as Inman Park; moneyed whites were accustomed to a black servant class and did not object to seeing black letter carriers in their offices and outside their houses. White letter carriers, on the other hand, served lower-class white neighborhoods, like the mill towns. Poor whites, the postmaster found, resented seeing blacks in government jobs, and were more apt to harass black letter carriers. Rich whites simply took black mailmen for granted and paid little attention to them. John Wesley Dobbs also worked in an integrated work force, and supervised both whites and blacks in his position as a railway postal clerk. As a requirement of this position, he, like George White, was legally licensed to carry a gun, which few blacks were permitted to do in that era.[7]

In the late 1880s, after years of scrimping, George and Madeline were able to buy the land at 101 Houston Street for five hundred dollars. By 1906, they had outgrown their little cottage, so they moved it to the back of the lot and built a large, two-story, eight-room house at the front of their

property, closer to the street. To make ends meet, they rented out the old cottage for forty dollars a month.

To further stretch their budget, the Whites took in boarders, often students or teachers from Atlanta University. One of these was Adrienne McNeil, the glamorous aspiring actress who would later head the drama department at the university. Adrienne, short and lithe with a lively manner and sophisticated bearing, had plenty of suitors, who would cluster around her after services at First Church, or stop by the White home to make calls. The most persistent was Alonzo Herndon, the barbershop entrepreneur, who often lingered late in the evening talking with Adrienne in the front room or on the porch. George White, a strict father to his own daughters, chaperoned Adrienne and the other boarders just as vigilantly. One evening, attempting to send Alonzo home, George came in the parlor and announced that he was shutting off the lights. "That's okay," said Herndon. "I like it better in the dark." Unamused, Mr. White shooed him away.[8]

Even under the watchful eye of George White, Alonzo and Adrienne's romance flourished, and they married in 1893. Their only child, a son named Norris, was born in 1897, and was a playmate of the White and Proctor children.

Adrienne Herndon and her friend, George Towns, were the first black professors hired to teach at Atlanta University. They joined the faculty in 1895, two years before W. E. B. Du Bois. Towns taught English and also served as AU's baseball and football coach. Adrienne, who taught drama and arts, had long aspired to a career on the stage. In 1894, shortly after marrying Alonzo and before taking her professorship, she trained at the Boston School of Expression. With her creamy skin, wavy brown hair, and dark eyes, Adrienne moved easily among white academics in Boston, and kept her racial background a secret from her instructors and fellow students, describing herself as a South Carolinian French-Creole. As her final project, she performed a critically acclaimed one-woman reading of *Anthony and Cleopatra* under the stage name Anne Du Bignon—passing as a white woman.[9]

Although the children of First Church's congregants felt at ease in the large yard surrounding the church, safe behind its fence, they occasionally had to contend with white children who lived on Courtland Street. Those children would stand outside the churchyard and taunt them. At the corner of Houston and Courtland stood a horse trough filled by a spigot from which Walter and the other children would drink, despite Mrs. White's exhortations about the dangers of germs. One day, when Walter was about eight years old, he was drinking from the fountain, and a white boy crept up behind him and shoved his back. Water sprayed all over Walter's face and clothes. The boy ran up the street, chanting about the dangers of "niggers drinking from white fountains." Walter, knowing he couldn't catch up, reached down and grabbed a rock and threw it at the boy. The rock connected, and blood ran down the back of the boy's head. Walter stood paralyzed with fear at the street corner, knowing that if the white family summoned the police and pressed charges, he'd be chastised, and his parents fined exorbitantly.

He raced home and pleaded with his mother to whip him. After he'd been home a few minutes, the white boy's mother appeared at the door. She and Madeline White talked earnestly, and eventually the white woman left to go home, and the matter was dropped.

But not quite. Walter still got a whipping. Madeline used peach-tree switches, the bark stripped off to make the lashing sting harder.

★★★

One side of First Church fronted Courtland Street, the north-south corridor that ran parallel to Peachtree. The road had previously been known as Collins Street and in the past was such a notorious site of brothels that Atlantans whispered a naughty limerick: "Peters Street for wagon yards, Whitehall Street for stores, Peachtree Street for dressy feet, and Collins Street for whores." In 1886, in an attempt to improve the area's image, residents petitioned the city council for a name change, and city fathers rechristened most of Collins Street Courtland.[10]

The new name may have been a first attempt to clean up the neighborhood, but twenty years after being dubbed Courtland, the street was still home to black and white prostitutes. One of Pastor Proctor's first missions was establishing the Crittendon House for Wayward Girls and Women, which served as a rehabilitation center for black working girls.

Like Piedmont Avenue, Decatur Street, and Broad Street, Courtland was one of the remaining racially integrated areas in 1906 Atlanta. On Courtland, black and white working- and middle-class homes and businesses were interspersed. Henry Hugh Proctor, the minister, lived in a house adjoining the church at 183 Courtland. A block to the south, at 150 Courtland, lived retired colonel John Bryan. A few blocks to the north, the Reverend Thomas L. Bryan rented a house at 232 Courtland, where he lived with his wife and three daughters—Orrie, Erin, and Tommie.[11]

But although they lived near each other and patronized each other's businesses, the families of Courtland and its neighboring streets were separated along racial lines by both law and custom. Walter White and his brother, George Jr., would never be able to attend Boys High School at 81 Courtland, recently constructed at a cost of $41,000 to taxpayers. The 310 students at Boys High School were white; there was no public high school for black students. The few public elementary schools that served black children were funded far less adequately than schools for whites. W. B. Matthews, the White family's friend, earned only seven hundred dollars a year as principal of the Gate City Colored School, while Margaret Thomas, principal of the white Marietta Street elementary school, took home eleven hundred dollars. W. M. Slaton, principal of Boys High, was paid two thousand dollars. Walter and his siblings, like the children of John Wesley Dobbs and other middle-class black families, attended high schools operated on the campuses of Atlanta University, Spelman Seminary, and the other black colleges.[12]

To pay for school and help defray household expenses, Walter started working early. At the age of ten he went to work for Ike Kalish, a tailor. A few years later, he took a position in the grand Piedmont Hotel. Like all the members of his family, Walter was extremely light-skinned, and

like his mother, had golden hair and startling blue eyes. He found that by "passing" as white he could work as a bellboy, a higher-paying position the Piedmont reserved for white employees. At the Piedmont he carried bags, delivered messages, and listened to the candid, and often cruelly bigoted, conversation of white businessmen and travelers. "What I saw and heard there made it impossible for me ever again to be taken in by the white man's boast of the superiority of his morals over those of the Negro," he wrote many years later.

Because all nine members of the White family were light-skinned, they faced peculiar dilemmas in turn-of-the-century Atlanta. When Madeline White and her daughters rode Atlanta's streetcars they encountered scowling looks—and sometimes open rebuke—if they sat in the rear seats designated for black passengers. "What are you doing with those colored folks?" white trolley car riders would ask. If they sat up front among the white passengers they would hear muttering from their friends, neighbors, and fellow churchgoers. What are you doing, Madeline? the well-meaning but vocal church ladies would ask Walter's mother. Trying to pass?

The hostility wasn't limited to Madeline White and her daughters. The family's friend, Lavinia Mott Crogman, wife of William Henry Crogman, president of Clark College, was also very light-skinned. One day, as Mrs. Crogman rode the streetcar, friend and fellow First Church congregant Dr. William Penn sat down to talk with her.

"Here, you, nigger, get out of that seat!" shouted a white man from the front of the car.

"It's come to a pretty pass when a colored man cannot sit with a woman of his own race in his own part of the car," retorted Dr. Penn.

"I'm going to thrash that nigger," shouted the white man, getting up and marching to the back of the car. Other passengers stood up and surged toward the action. The conductor and driver came back and dispersed the crowd. Dr. Penn stole away out the trolley's back door.[13]

Lavinia Crogman's husband, William, a feisty West Indies native who'd gone to sea as a fourteen-year-old and traveled the globe for eleven years before coming to the United States to pursue a career as an educator, re-

fused to submit to the Jim Crow rules of Atlanta's streetcars and, when required to visit downtown Atlanta, walked the three miles from the Clark campus. Other elite blacks also refused to ride the streetcars and be subjected to forced segregation. Atlanta University professor George Towns rode a bicycle everywhere. Alonzo Herndon, the wealthiest black man in Atlanta, walked to his barbershop. W. E. B. Du Bois lived near campus so he could be a few blocks' stroll from the classroom.[14]

Restrictions such as those caused by the streetcar situation led frugal George White to make the spendthrift purchase of a surrey, which he kept in the shed alongside his postal wagon and would hitch to the mustang when Mrs. White and her daughters wanted to go visiting or to a distant market. He couldn't really afford the surrey, but he couldn't afford the confrontation that arose every time Madeline or one of his five daughters wanted to ride the trolley.

When he was much older, Walter said he realized that the surrey was his father's "only extravagance."[15]

8

Two Meetings and One Party

> "Our Southland today has no greater enemy to business progress than lynchers and those who provoke lynching."
> — BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, as quoted in *Atlanta Constitution*, August 30, 1906

There had been consternation about the cost of a banquet ticket. A front-page editorial in the *Atlanta Independent* called the $1.50 price "blood money" and groused that it was simply too much for "a cold sandwich, a little salad, and a glass of ice tea."[1] But in the end the fee did not seem to deter many people from attending the final event of the 1906 convention of the National Negro Business League. Five hundred guests arrived at the elegant neoclassical entrance of the Georgia Building in Atlanta's Piedmont Park for the dinner, which capped off four days of festivities and meetings.

That Friday night, August 31, looking out over the crowd, Mont Howell, head of the welcoming committee and dinner cochair (with Gate City Colored School principal W. B. Matthews), could be justified in feeling proud. Howell commendably hosted the two thousand out-of-town attendees — lawyers, doctors, publishers, bankers, merchants, artists, and other black business leaders — who came to Atlanta from twenty states for the conference.

No detail had been left to chance. Josie D. Heard, director of music at Morris Brown College, arranged for virtuoso violin performers at the

Tuesday evening Grand Concert at Big Bethel Church. The reception area that Howell and his team of volunteers staged at the YMCA (Colored) at 132 Auburn Avenue had spacious exhibit space for merchants, a European-style cafeteria, a staffed information table, and rest areas for dignitaries. Convention delegates took tours of Atlanta's black-owned businesses. Stops included Gus Williams's ice cream parlor, Moses Amos's Gate City Drug Store, and Mont Howell's own enterprise, the People's Shoe Store, which the *Independent* called "the swellest negro business in the city."

Convention organizers took great care to help out-of-town delegates cope with Atlanta's strict segregation laws. Howell negotiated with the city council to obtain loosened restrictions at the grand new Terminal Station, which featured, in addition to segregated waiting areas and ticket counters, racially divided entrances and exits. Welcoming committee members wore special badges that allowed them full access to the station in order to greet arriving passengers and help them navigate the segregated areas. Permission to hold the dinner in one of the former 1895 Cotton States Exposition buildings in Piedmont Park — off-limits to Atlanta's blacks, like most city parks — came only after prolonged wrangling with the city council. Guests appreciated the Atlanta committee's efforts. The *Indianapolis Freeman* reported, "Every vestige of the so-called 'Jim Crow' restrictions on street cars, in the parks and public buildings, were totally suspended. Not a single instance of discomfort through the operation of race prejudice was reported." White Atlanta leaders made a show of participating in the conference; Mayor James Woodward delivered a welcoming address and Captain English spoke to a session of the meeting.[2]

Because only a handful of hotels in the city welcomed black guests, Howell and Matthews arranged for Atlantans to host convention delegates in their homes, at a fee of $1.50 per day for room and board, or 50¢ for lodging only. If visitors asked for private rooms, hosts would "need to negotiate" mutually acceptable rates, Howell advised.[3]

Aspiring entrepreneurs made up the bulk of the attendees. They were inspired by the famous faces in their midst: T. Thomas Fortune, editor of the *New York Age*; J. Madison Vance, a New Orleans attorney; and

H. C. Wallace, a Mississippi banker. But the true celebrity of the week was Booker T. Washington.

While in Atlanta for the conference, Washington and his wife, Margaret, stayed with Henry and Annie Rucker, who lived at 152 Piedmont Avenue. Henry Rucker, the first black Internal Revenue Service manager for Georgia, and Annie, daughter of Jefferson Long, the first black Georgia Congressman, were actively involved in the education of their children (they would eventually have eight). It was not uncommon to eat dinner at their home and find that the whole family would have decided to decree it a meal time during which they would speak only Latin.

The Atlanta Women's Club hosted a reception for Mrs. Washington. The club was launched just that year by social crusader Addie Waites Hunton, the wife of William Hunton, national secretary of the YMCA (Colored), which was based in Atlanta. At the reception, Addie Hunton entertained a hundred women, entrepreneurs, educators, and spouses of Business League participants. It was an elegant affair, and Mrs. Hunton had filled her house with flowers and ferns for the occasion.[4]

Although he and his wife were given celebrity treatment by the city's black community, Washington knew he would be scrutinized by whites. In the decade since his national triumph delivering the "Atlanta Compromise" speech at the 1895 Cotton States Exposition, Washington had become a shrewd practitioner of public relations. Cognizant of tensions in Atlanta, and of the white community's suspicion of the growing educational and economic clout of the Business League members, Washington met with the editors of Atlanta's white daily newspapers before delivering his keynote speech, and made sure that each editor had an advance copy of the speech to reproduce in his pages.

Of course, treatment of the speech and coverage of the NNBL convention varied according to the biases of each paper. Charles Daniel of the *News* printed the opening-day agenda on the front page of his August 28 edition, but placed it next to a story on racial tensions in the Georgia Republican Party. Daniel also imbued his story with a not-so-subtle nega-

tive slant, reminding readers that Washington and his wife were the house-guests of unpopular black tax collector Henry Rucker. The *News* pointed out that when Washington and guests toured the city, bystanders gaped at the "colored party—a very unusual sight in a touring car in Atlanta."[5]

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Washington delivered his keynote on the evening of Wednesday, August 29, 1906. He spoke to the throng packed into the auditorium at Big Bethel, the grand gothic church built by a congregation formed while its members were still enslaved. Washington's audience crowded the church foyer and overflowed onto Auburn Avenue. The "Wizard of Tuskegee" repeated his refrain of salvation through hard work, equality through exertion, and acceptance through accommodation. "It is the policy of this organization to hold up before the race its advantages rather than its disadvantages, its successes rather than its failures," he reminded his listeners. The role of the NNBL, said Washington in a none-too-subtle stab at Du Bois's Niagara manifesto, was to "call the attention of the world to the efforts of our friends, rather than to those of our enemies."[6]

Washington pointed to tangible results of black self-reliance. When he founded the League in 1900, he reminded the crowd, only two black-owned banks operated in the United States: in 1906 there were thirty-three. Black people, he noted, owned at least 300 million dollars in taxable property—20 million dollars in Georgia alone.

But even as the attendees admired the achievements of the vibrant black middle class in the Gate City, they were reminded of the growing tension between black and white Atlanta. The memory of Frank Carmichael's bullet-riddled death at the hands of a vengeful posse was still raw. While conventioneers arrived at Terminal Station, mobs of whites were still searching Atlanta's outskirts area looking for alleged assailants in the Hembree and Lawrence attacks. Washington addressed the fear of mob vengeance head on. "The crime of lynching everywhere and at all times should be

condemned and those who commit crimes of any nature should be condemned," he said.

However, Washington also urged members of the Business League to separate themselves from the lower classes of their own race, "the loafers, the gamblers, the drunkards," the riffraff who frequented the dives on Decatur Street. The behavior of lower-class blacks, he said, triggered white fear of black criminals. "I think I would be safe in saying that no graduate of Clark University, Atlanta Baptist College, Atlanta University, Morris Brown College or Spelman Seminary has been arrested for any crime in Atlanta during the past twelve months," asserted Washington.

Despite their financial and cultural successes, many of those attending the conference in Atlanta knew that their achievements would still be overlooked by whites—southern and northern—who, while recognizing the successes of individual blacks, looked down on the race as a whole. The Reverend J. W. Spearman had written in an editorial in the *Independent* just a few weeks earlier: "When you go out into the deepest researches of the white man's private principle, you will find him to be a most hostile enemy growing out of racial supremacy. Let him be a friend to you individually, but just as sure as you live, when you begin to rise as a race, he will press you back."[7]

Washington himself had firsthand knowledge of the taboo against black men socializing with whites—especially white women. A year before, after the conclusion of the 1905 National Negro Business League meeting in New York, he had been invited to dinner with the family of department store tycoon John Wanamaker at an upscale hotel in the New York resort town of Saratoga. This caused a scandal when southern newspapers reported that Washington had not only shared a meal with white people, but also escorted Mary Brown Warburton, Wanamaker's daughter, to the dinner table, her arm in his. The *Montgomery Advertiser* editorialized: "[Washington] knows how deep and impossible is the gulf between whites and blacks in the South, where the social situation is involved. He deliberately flaunts all this in the face of the Southern people among whom

he is living and among whom his work has to be carried on. He could have given no harder blow to his institution than he gave when he marched into that Saratoga dining room with a white woman and her father."[8]

Even *Atlanta Independent* editor Benjamin Davis, usually a staunch Bookerite, was scandalized. He wrote to Washington demanding an explanation and begging for assurance that such a thing would not happen, particularly during the 1906 League conference in Atlanta. With terse politeness, Washington replied, "Of course you are aware that I would not permit myself to be drawn into a display of folly. . . . I try to be as careful as possible in such matters, but it is impossible to act, in the North, as the Southern people demand." Despite his brio, Washington was fully aware that although he may have dined with Queen Victoria and the Wanamaker heiress, in Atlanta brushing close to a white farmer's wife while riding a streetcar could mean a death sentence at the hands of a lynch mob.[9]

Examining the coverage of Washington's 1906 Business League speech by the Atlanta dailies revealed that his words were twisted according to editors' sensibilities. Each paper overemphasized Washington's discussion of "law-breaking" blacks while underplaying his comments about Atlanta's black commercial and academic successes. "He spoke of the South as the best place for the negro, and of the negroes who commit crimes that are punishable by lynching," reported the *Journal*.[10]

But by that Friday night, after days of meetings, concerts, meals, and presentations, there was time to celebrate. The candlelight glowing throughout the grand Georgia Building illuminated the faces of graduates of Clark, Morris Brown, Yale, Harvard, and other colleges. As they made their way to the line of carriages and automobiles waiting outside after the dinner, Mont Howell, Benjamin Davis, Washington, and hundreds of educated, cultured, and ambitious black Americans celebrated the strides they had made.

In the morning, many of the delegates would board a train for Tuskegee to tour Washington's institution and see his "method" in action. The consummate host, Mont Howell had been able to negotiate a discount round-trip ticket for the excursion—$3.00 instead of the regular $9.16.

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While Mont Howell attended to the last-minute preparations for the Business League banquet, two miles across town another group of several hundred people was assembling. White business owners, newspaper editors, pastors, war veterans, and lawmakers packed the auditorium of the YMCA building at the corner of Auburn Avenue and Pryor Streets, just a few blocks from the old YMCA building that had been relegated to Atlanta's blacks and served as the League exhibit space. Walter Foote, owner of the Foote & Davies printing company, drove to the meeting in his new car, taking his neighbor, department store owner George Muse, along for the ride.[11] They arrived to find a standing-room-only crowd. Their goal: issue a responsible call for action in response to what seemed to be a wave of crime against white women.

Captain W. D. Ellis, a Civil War hero and former prisoner of war and now a highly regarded lawyer, delivered the opening remarks. We've already done some good, he assured the men gathered on that hot Friday evening. By stepping in, we leaders of Atlanta are dispelling the hysteria surrounding the fear of black criminals. Ellis, now warmed up, went on, "We want to arouse the public authorities to the immediate necessity of doing something and let them know that the expense is nothing compared to the suppression of the terrible crimes to which our people have been subjected."[12]

Many of the men who gathered in the YMCA meeting room had already signed a petition drafted by Ellis, reprinted in the daily papers, and circulated among downtown businesses owners. The petition condemned the notion of reviving the Klan or any such "white-capped organization," but also called for Fulton County to add additional police officers to quash the wave of crimes against white women. The document stated: "The assaults upon white women and girls by criminals meets our severest condemnation. We denounce it as damnable, outrageous, and as putting in peril the peace, good order and welfare of all people in this community." The petition also called for added police officers and closing all of the

"dives" in Atlanta, particularly those on Decatur and Peters streets. Finally, its signers demanded that the local press continue "advocating the suppression of crime and upholding the hands of the law-abiding citizens."[13]

George Muse, considered de facto leader of Atlanta's merchants, called the meeting ready for business and opened the floor for comments. Linton Hopkins spoke first. After reading Charles Daniel's editorial calling for the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, Hopkins, an attorney in private practice, had stormed from his law offices on Peachtree into the *Atlanta News* building at the corner of Alabama and Forsyth streets. He berated Daniel, accusing him of fomenting violence. Daniel quickly backpedaled. Linton Hopkins, after all, was not only a prominent attorney and the son of Civil War veteran and judge John L. Hopkins, but also the brother of Charles T. Hopkins who happened to be a member of the *News* board of directors and a stockholder in the newspaper. (The three Hopkins men shared a reputation as brilliant attorneys. John Hopkins and his wife, Mary Elizabeth, had had seven children, but the only two who lived to adulthood were Charles and Linton, who followed their father into the law.)

So in the Friday, August 31, edition of his paper, circulated just before that evening's meeting, Daniel had printed an open letter to Linton Hopkins, explaining that, although he had been approached by a representative of a group wishing to reorganize the Klan, "upon reflection and consideration of the situation in Atlanta and Fulton County, it appeared unwise and unsafe to promote any such organization, especially at this time."[14]

Now, in front of the men assembled in the YMCA auditorium, Linton Hopkins continued to call for prudence. Let's elect a committee — say, thirty men — to go to the city council on Monday, he suggested. Ayes rang out. "We white men must put shoulder to shoulder," called Edward S. Gay, grocery store owner.[15]

While signing petitions and listening to speechifying by civic leaders did not equal the direct call to action that Daniel had so strongly advocated, he decided that it represented some action nonetheless, and rose to address the group. Daniel, a slim, clean-shaven man, relished the spotlight. He let the group know that he'd already made inquiries about instituting

separate streetcars for Atlanta's blacks, much in the way that already had been implemented in Savannah. Daniel also nominated himself to be a member of the committee of thirty proposed by Linton Hopkins.

The final committee included *Atlanta Journal* editor James Gray, Clark Howell, Hoke Smith, Asa Candler, and real-estate developer Edward H. Inman. More than three hundred men, representing a who's who of Atlanta's professionals and businesses, signed the petition. Among the names on the list: attorney Jack J. Spalding, the Ansley brothers, Morris Rich, Clarence Haverty, attorney Robert C. Alston, the Reverend W. C. Lovett, and Ernest Woodruff. Businesses represented included Jacob's Pharmacy, Muse's store, Trust Company of Georgia, and jewelers Maier & Berkele.[16]

As dusk fell, Atlanta's white leaders headed home from their meeting, a plan of action in place for the next week. After he dropped Muse off, Walter Foote wrote in his diary, "Meeting of the best citizens to prevent the Ku Klux. Gave ride to Mr. Muse. He is one of Atlanta's finest men."

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A slightly less opulent, but no less carefully orchestrated, event took place on that same evening. In their home at 75 Chestnut Street, Mr. and Mrs. Alonzo Alexander hosted an engagement party for Laura Brown and James Black.

Laura, the peppy and popular "Atlanta Happenings" columnist for the *Independent*, was a fixture on black Atlanta's social scene. She covered parties, church news, cultural events, and gossip in her weekly column. Her beau, Colonel James Black Jr., was considered an up-and-coming young man with bright prospects.

Guests lingered late into the evening toasting the young couple, who enjoyed themselves mightily, despite the many jokes at their expense.[17]

9

Low Dives and Blind Tigers

> "[Decatur Street dives are] a veritable inferno where the souls of men and women are being gulped down at an appalling rate."
> — H. B. WATSON, *Voice of the Negro*, September 1906

Few middle-class Atlantans of either race publicly questioned whether the men accused of sex crimes reported in the local press over the summer of 1906 had actually committed them. Instead, Atlanta's bourgeoisie speculated on how much more crime might be percolating in the city's bars, brothels, and saloons. The *Journal*'s editors opined: "It has been a fact that the negro clubs and restaurants which have only been disguised dives of the worst class, have fostered and engendered criminals of the lowest species." The *Constitution* reported, "the police . . . have found that idleness breeds viciousness and say that the loafing vagrants are the class that are assaulting white women."[1]

Many elite blacks condemned the dives just as harshly as white newspaper editors and politicians. Writing in the *Voice of the Negro*'s September 1906 issue, H. B. Watson described Decatur Street as a place crowded with "staggering men and swaggering, brazen women congesting the shops, the saloons, the alleys and the back ways — people divested of all shame and remorse."[2]

Just a few blocks away from Five Points, the commercial heart of the city, Decatur Street was Atlanta's notorious center of sex and sin, home

to "dive" saloons and "blind tiger" bars. The term "blind tiger" entered the southern vernacular because bar owners would dodge licensing rules by advertising animal and other attractions in their establishments, promising guests a "free drink" if they made (paying) visits to see the blind tiger, two-headed dog, or other natural oddity—which may or may not even have existed.

The street and the adjacent blocks were lined with small brick shops and wooden shanties, in between which nestled wagon lots, where visitors from rural suburbs would park their farm carts for the day. The farm wagons frequently served as fronts for smuggled moonshine and bootleg liquor. A sure sign that such contraband was being sold was seeing a stream of men coming and going from a wagon lot. Decatur Street was a riot of sounds and smells, thanks to its dank saloons, lunchrooms serving fried fish, fruit stands jamming the sidewalks, and a large Chinese laundry that emitted a steady stream of steam into the humid Georgia air.[3]

Frequent reports on the conditions of the dives titillated middle-class newspaper readers. On August 25, two reporters from the *Constitution* had strolled Decatur and Peters Street and reported that, in an eight-block distance, they had counted 376 black men "hanging out in front of saloons or inside them," tipsy but not drunk enough to be arrested on public intoxication charges. The reporters chastised the men for "idling and loafing" while building contractors desperately tried to find able-bodied workers to fill their payrolls. The *Constitution* speculated: "These negroes live [in houses]. They wear clothes and eat, and how do they do it? Either they or their wives are stealing."[4]

Temperance crusaders such as Henry Hugh Proctor of First Church preached about the evils of the dives to their congregations, and both white and African American newspapers reprinted those sermons. In decrying the evils of the dives, black preachers used the same fiery language as white newspaper editors. "We feel humiliated by and disgraced because of the recent fiendish and inexcusable outbreaks and assaults by certain inhuman black brutes who happen to be connected with our race," a group of Baptist ministers wrote to the *Independent*.[5]

Cleaning up the bars and dance halls and modeling socially acceptable behavior to lower-class blacks were the chosen missions of many of Atlanta's black elite, particularly a number of women involved in social, civic, and church clubs. Addie Waites Hunton, organizer of the National Association of Women's Clubs, espoused the belief that it would be black women who would uplift the race through "womanly virtue and integrity." She and other black female leaders acknowledged the double standard in white southern culture that made sexual or social interaction between white women and black men a taboo prosecuted with deadly vigilante justice, while turning a blind eye to sexual relations between white men and black women, whether in the plantation days of coercion, or in turn-of-the-century low dives and houses of prostitution in downtown Atlanta.[6]

Women associated with the leading black churches, often the pastors' wives, mounted crusades for sexual purity and temperance. These efforts underscored the division between the black middle class—university professors, teachers, doctors, dentists, business owners, and ministers—and the black working class. Adeline Davis Proctor, wife of the First Church minister, published a pamphlet called *Negro Womanhood—Its Present*, which outlined what she identified as three tiers of black women. She insisted the lowest class was what whites considered representative of the race. To improve their own social standing, black women of the highest class should teach proper behavior and moral values to their poorer, ignorant sisters, thereby elevating the perception of all black women, Adeline Proctor urged. Sylvia Jenkins Bryant, wife of Peter Bryant, pastor of Wheat Street Baptist, also advocated female virtues, speaking out on the importance of "the sweet and modest action of a tender, loving mother." Just as Washington and Du Bois spoke of racial "uplift" through hard work, commercial success, or education, these female crusaders touted chastity and decorum as tools of uplift.[7]

In the summer of 1906, as tensions between whites and blacks intensified, black church leaders aggressively distanced their congregants from the habitués of Decatur Street. On the Sunday before Labor Day, the members of Antioch A.M.E. church met to pass a resolution. The Reverend J. G.

Robinson, pastor, N. W. Burdett, director of the Sunday school, and M. Wilson, church clerk, drafted an open letter to the white citizens of Fulton and DeKalb Counties, putting themselves "on the record against the perpetration of crime in any and all forms."[8]

The church members clearly distinguished themselves from "criminals" of the race and asked the white newspaper readers to take note of "our family life and home loving habits," promising to cooperate with the law and to "notify officers of the law of the whereabouts of any suspicious characters seen by us at any time or place." They also called on their fellow black churchgoers to meet for a session at Bishop Henry McNeal Turner's tabernacle to publicly express a solid front "regarding present conditions, and to give to the world our disapproval of crime, the existence of dives and to ask that all negroes not be lumped in with the vicious element of the race."

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As summer drew to a close, raids on the bars continued. On August 26 and 27, police sweeps through Decatur and Peters streets resulted in dozens of arrests. The *Constitution* noted that black women represented the majority of the people taken into custody, and that "a visitor to the female ward of the prison would find the women banked up about two-feet high, forming a human floor." Most of the arrested women were given a one-dollar fine and a stern warning before being released.[9]

Income from fines in the police court represented a steady cash stream for the city of Atlanta. Court recorder Nash R. Broyles, a descendant of Francis Nash, the Revolutionary War hero who had died battling the British in Germantown, Pennsylvania, was known for his heavy hand with the gavel and his propensity to issue large fines and stiff jail terms. Between 1899 and 1900, income from fines levied in his court increased from $25,550.23 to $37,766.20. The poorest convicts, unable to pay the fines, worked off the charges in labor camps. Close to a third of the people Broyles sentenced were forced to take that option.[10]

Broyles prosecuted blacks at a much higher rate—of the fourteen thousand people who came before his bench in 1900, ten thousand were black, and of those, seventeen hundred were boys and young men under the age of twenty. Considering that there were forty thousand black residents of Atlanta at the time, even if multiple arrests of the same people are taken into account, Broyles's sentencing amounted to almost half the black male population of the city.

Broyles, whose brother, Arnold, served as the Fulton County Superior Court clerk (and was on the board of directors of the *News*), was upfront about his double standard, especially when it came to youthful offenders. "I have never sent young white boys or white girls to the stockade, as I have realized it would mean their complete ruin," he told a historian.

Nash Broyles's courtroom was so notorious for sentencing blacks that the *Constitution* ran a regular comic feature, "Police Matinee Pen Shots," in which Gordon Noel Hurtel—in the broad dialect popular in Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus stories, and accompanied by crude cartoons—recounted misadventures of arrestees brought to the bench of "Jedge Briles." A typical installment is from August 12, 1906:

> "What's the matter with you, got a chill?" Judge Broyles asked an old negro who hobbled from the waiting room all swathed in coats and mufflers.
>
> "Naw, sah. I hain't got no chill, neider," muttered the old man as he tied a rag about his neck.
>
> "This is Andy Johnson," explained the arresting officer, "and we have got him for idling and loitering about the city. Andy won't work except in winter, vowing it is too hot for anybody to labor."

Broyles, Hurtel noted, sentenced the man to thirty days in the stockade.[11]

Arrests represented a modest cash flow for the city. The more significant moneymaker was business licenses paid by saloons and retail outlets. License fees for retail liquor establishments amounted to $85,887 in 1900, the most lucrative category for the city's collections division, which that same year recorded $84,096 for "general business" licenses.

In 1900, the city council had passed a resolution allowing restaurants and bars to be declared "white only," but there was no designation for "black only" businesses. It was an open secret that businesses in the Decatur Street entertainment district catered to whites as well as blacks, drawing local white customers and plenty of working-class and rural visitors to Atlanta, who found Decatur and Peters streets easily accessible from the rail stations and shipping yards. So while black Atlantans saw the number of restaurants, lunchrooms and saloons that they could frequent continue to shrink, whites could patronize black-operated businesses—which, along Decatur Street, at least, they often did.

In many dives, whites and blacks intermingled. In some of the businesses, screens or curtains separated the white section of the establishment from the area catering to blacks, which was invariably relegated to the darker space at the rear of the dive.

The Jim Crow laws prohibited black ownership of saloons, establishments licensed to serve hard liquor. The only established black-operated saloon in the summer of 1906 was Charles Moseley's Vendome, located on Ivy Street. Moseley aggressively advertised his business in the *Independent*, promising visitors courteous treatment and comfortable, relaxing surroundings they wouldn't find in white-operated bars. "The Vendome is the place to take your friends when they come to town," urged an ad in the *Independent*. "There are no screens or discriminations there. The place is entirely under the control of colored men."[12]

Some enterprising business operators—both black and white—got around the rules and license fees required to operate saloons by running "lunchrooms" where beer could be served along with food, a technicality easily circumvented by operators such as Rosa Edwards, a black woman whose Decatur Street enterprise included rooming facilities (ten cents a night on a mattress in a room that held nine or more beds) and was a place where bootleg liquor was served. Some of the dives were appalling flophouses, frequented by both black and white patrons, and operated by both black and white management. Many existed in the basements of grocery and hardware stores along Peters and Decatur streets, in shotgun

shacks, or in alleys behind the main streets. In these "low dives," police reported, criminals sold opium and cocaine, and women plied sexual services. Among the dives, a number of dance halls flourished, including 81 Theater, where Tommy Dorsey, a seven-year-old piano prodigy, often played into the early morning hours.[13]

But many Decatur Street businesses were legitimate. For more than twenty years, Mattie Adams and her family ran an establishment at 197 Peters Street that served home-cooked specials like fried chicken and country vegetables. Adams's business, listed in the city directory as a "lunchroom," was one of just a dozen restaurants serving black Atlantans.

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By late August, conflict between the races was palpable. "The situation is acute and the tension between the races is strained to the breaking point," wrote Davis in the *Independent*. "The least racial friction at this time will precipitate conditions in which the Negro, in the inevitable, must lose out."[14]

The letter from Antioch Church contained an even more ominous warning—a statement by Sheriff John Nelms: "The outrages upon white women must stop if every negro in many miles of Atlanta have [sic] to be killed."[15]

10

Celebration

> "Let us establish in Georgia, in the South, yes, in America, the doctrine of everlasting white supremacy."
> —JAMES ANDERSON, as quoted in the *Atlanta Constitution*, September 5, 1906

For weeks, Randolph Rose, president of the R. M. Rose Company, and Jack Reynolds, manager of Phoenix Advertising and Decorating, huddled in secret, planning the R. M. Rose float for the Labor Day parade. Rose wanted something extravagant and original, and Reynolds, known for creating eye-catching window displays in Peachtree Street storefronts, eagerly helped. Randolph Rose and his father, Rufus, helmed a company that manufactured "medicinal whiskies." Savvy promoters, the Roses ran advertisements in papers ranging from the *Constitution* to the *Independent,* touting liquors that they vowed could safely treat any family member's ailment. (The *Georgian,* a staunch prohibitionist paper, refused the ads.)[1]

For the Labor Day parade, Randolph Rose and Jack Reynolds dreamed up the concept of "revenue officer"—the colonial Georgia official who would ride into cities to assess taxes on corn and other crops. The resulting float included a thirty-foot, silk-draped ear of corn. Riding on its surface was the blue-silk-draped officer attended by several bodyguards. In front of the float proceeded advance "outriders" and a white-robed herald.

On the morning of Labor Day, parade participants packed the staging

area at Peachtree and Whitehall. As the *Journal* noted: "Workingmen make a habit of getting up early, most of them with the sun. And the custom wasn't broken Monday. . . . By the time office folks were having breakfast, hundreds of masons and carpenters and coppersmiths were on the streets, clearing their pipes and telling each other howdy."[2]

Organized labor had increased in power over the past few years, in large part due to the 1888 election of mayor James Woodward. A printmaker who had been employed at the *Journal* at the time of his election, Woodward was the first mayor of postbellum Atlanta to come from the trades instead of law or military. In the 1904 mayoral race, politics became a true spectator sport as Atlantans participated in betting pools on the race's outcome. Woodward, ranked at seven-to-five odds, was a runaway victor, trouncing Harry Stockdell, the candidate backed by Captain English. As mayor, Woodward significantly expanded Labor Day festivities in Atlanta. Enormously popular with white, working-class Atlantans, the mayor was a jovial man with a folksy manner and impressive handlebar mustache. He was well known for a fondness for the celebratory drink or two.[3]

As the parade participants made final touches to their displays and costumes, their audience crowded along Peachtree and Whitehall Streets, leaning from windows and sneaking out onto rooftops. Hundreds of little boys clambered up to the parapets on either end of the Whitehall Street viaduct, causing *Constitution* reporter Edward C. Bruffey to observe, "Particularly owing to the very brunette complexion of the majority, this trestlework resembled the fence of the cornfield in sowing time with crows waiting to seize their first opportunity." The viaduct was one of the crowning achievements of Woodward's time in office; crossing the rail lines at the center of the city, it allowed for more automobile and foot traffic between the northern and southern business districts on Peachtree Street and had significantly reduced accidents and fatalities.[4]

The Labor Day celebration was certainly a blue-collar affair, with tradesmen and unions taking the lead. But elite Atlantans turned out, as spectators at least, many watching from the office windows in Peachtree Street skyscrapers.

At the head of the parade rode Police Chief Henry Jennings with a phalanx of mounted police officers. He was followed by a float drawn by four white horses carrying fifty little girls in white dresses, each wearing a sash embroidered with a "virtue" of the workingman. Following them rode various dignitaries in carriages and then a military band.

The unions marched in order after this, some with floats they had made. These floats were elaborate representations of the union members in action, created by blacksmiths (complete with burning furnace) and barbers (with clients in chairs) and carpenters (who built a playhouse complete with shutters and door over the course of the parade route). Many unions selected young girls to march in white dresses and sashes at their leads. Henrietta Russell represented the Pressman's Union, No. 8, and Lottie Moore, the sheet metal workers, No. 85.[5]

The black labor unions also marched, representing plasterers, carpenters, painters, paperhangers, and decorators. In a short item on its editorial page, the *Independent* staff reported: "Never before have we seen such a spirit of general good will among all classes of citizens and mutual respect between the races."[6]

Crowds cheered for the union workers, and oohed and aahed over the brawny displays of the blacksmiths and locomotive firemen, just the kind of burly men, Bruffey noted, "most folks want on their side rather than on the other when trouble starts."[7]

But the magnificent R. M. Rose float, with the extravagant revenue officer tableau conceived by Randolph Rose and Jack Reynolds, the first float to follow the unions, received the most applause. The float won a prize from the parade committee.

It was a record-setting Labor Day celebration, not just for the parade and its thirty-two floats, but also for the crowds that packed the city. Residents from the rural areas surrounding Atlanta swarmed into town—the Georgia railroad company later reported that 154,266 people rode the streetcars that day, a record. (And, the company noted, all of those passengers paid for tickets.)[8]

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The parade and speeches ended by noon and most Atlanta businesses shut by one o'clock. It was a hot, clear day, and the afternoon and evening yielded to the pursuit of cool comforts—drinking and eating at saloons, picnicking in Grant's Park, and swimming in the shallows at Lakewood.

Many wealthy whites slipped out of the city proper after the parade to take part in a regatta at East Lake Country Club. Founded in 1904, East Lake was an expansive retreat with an eighteen-hole golf course as its centerpiece, as well as bowling greens, tennis courts, and a gun club. One of the charter members was James English Jr.

For many families, this marked a last holiday before their sons left for college. A few were headed north and east, among them Lamar Collier (Cornell), and Clarence Knowles (Princeton). Hunter Muse, son of George Muse, was among those staying close to home; he had enrolled in Georgia Tech, as had Charles Collier and William Rich. Both of attorney Jack Spalding's sons were college bound, Jack Jr. to Tech and Hugh to Georgetown.

Students and their parents eagerly anticipated Tech's coming football season. A former college star, John Heisman, a lineman for Brown University and the University of Pennsylvania, had joined Tech as coach in 1904. He was the first paid college football coach in the country and had gotten Tech off to a promising start. Heisman's salary, while unprecedented, was not large. He complemented his Tech earnings by performing as a Shakespearean actor and filing sports stories for local newspapers.

In the city, working-class white Atlantans packed the skating rink at Ponce de Leon Park, or tested their skills in the arcades. Blacks headed for Langford's White Midway at Piedmont Avenue and Decatur Street.[9]

Some whites sought the cool, darkened comfort of the Bijou Theater, where Al Field's minstrel show, which had had a hit run in Atlanta in 1905, started a 1906 season. The troupe advertised itself as providing "genuine old-time black-face minstrel performance." The show's sketches included

Ponce de Leon Park, shown here in 1910, was white-only. Courtesy, Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, fulo704-82.

the popular Harvey Weaver singing ballads, Billy Beard's monologues, and a bit known as "The Great Lynch."

The city's two movie houses—the Star at 36 Decatur Street and the Eldorado at 146 Marietta Street—also drew crowds. And, of course, white and black customers alike crowded into the dives on Decatur and Peters streets.[10]

★★★

In all the holiday excitement, two news items were largely overlooked.

First, early on Sunday morning, while Atlantans attended church or prepared for the Labor Day festivities, F. M. Trammell, a police patrol-wagon driver, arrested a man trying to break into the S. H. Kress five-and-ten-cent store. The suspect, identified as Clark Hill, was a sturdy black man who met Mabel Lawrence's description of the man who had attacked her and her aunt, Ethel. Trammell, described by the *Journal* as "the smallest man in

any way connected with the police force," engaged Hill in hand-to-hand combat and eventually knocked him out using a billy club. Hill, who denied having anything to do with the Lawrence case, was held at the police station over the holiday.[11]

On Monday, the front page of the *Constitution* carried a short item reporting that W. E. B. Du Bois had been selected as assistant superintendent for schools in Washington, D.C. The newspaper was unable to confirm the report through Atlanta University because Du Bois was on the road, reportedly in Ohio.[12]

"How correct for Prof. 'Web' Du Bois to go to the District of Columbia, where you pay no taxes and cannot vote as in the states," commented the *Independent*'s editorial writers. "Sure the man and the place have met!"[13]

A few days later, the papers reported that Du Bois had not, in fact, received the job, and that he would be staying in Atlanta.

★★★

On Monday afternoon, while most of Atlanta celebrated the Labor Day holiday with parades, picnics, and excursions to the amusement park, Hoke Smith and his political inner circle headed to the station to catch the train for Macon. They were on their way to another celebration — Smith's official acceptance of the Democratic Party's nomination in the governor's race, which, given the Democrats' lock on Georgia politics, assured him the governorship come 1907.

To win the two-year term as governor, Smith had campaigned for more than a year. Although having the *Journal* as a mouthpiece had been instrumental to his victory in the primary, more vital was his appeal to poor, white voters. To connect with those Georgians, Smith had traveled more than twenty-five thousand miles during the campaign and delivered as many as six speeches a day during the crucial final months.[14]

Smith rode in the train with James Gray, editor of the *Journal* and one of his strongest supporters. The Democratic Party designated Gray chairman of the convention committee on platforms and resolutions, and so as they

HOKE SMITH
GEORGIA'S
NEXT
GOVERNOR
BAND

traveled, Gray put finishing touches to the party platform document, which he and Smith had worked on throughout the campaign. Central to the platform would be Tom Watson's proposed "grandfather clause," a dodge designed to extend white voting privileges while further circumscribing blacks.[15]

Despite the 1904 implementation of whites-only primary elections that essentially excluded blacks from the political process, populists like Watson feared it wasn't enough. They argued that voting restrictions that had been put in place by white party leaders and initially designed to keep blacks from the polls, such as literacy requirements or poll taxes, would end up hurting poor, illiterate whites. With Georgia blacks reportedly going to college at a higher rate than whites, and with black businesses growing in Atlanta and elsewhere, the existing voting restrictions would backfire, Watson convinced Smith, who then used the argument to lock up the poor, white vote. Core to their campaign was a proposed amendment to the state constitution that would include a loophole devised to give poor whites a way to circumvent the poll restrictions. Their "grandfather clause" gave any man who had voted prior to Reconstruction — or who could prove his father or grandfather had done so — the right to vote.

★★★

Their train was more than an hour late and when they got to Macon a crowd that had grown raucous while waiting greeted Smith and his entourage at the station. They then went to Smith's headquarters at the Hotel Lanier to prepare for the convention scheduled to start the next morning, Tuesday, September 4, 1906.

Conspicuously absent from the gathering in the Macon convention center the next day was Tom Watson, the populist credited as the architect of

Opposite: Hoke Smith campaign stop in Ben Hill, Georgia, 1906. Courtesy, Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, ben0121.

Smith's success. A headline in Clark Howell's *Constitution* gloated, "Absence of Tom Watson Causes Much Rejoicing." The newspaper, reflecting the sting of editor Clark Howell's trouncing in the polls by Smith, observed that Watson, having failed to win the vote of McDuffie, his own county, was not at the convention as a representative. The *Constitution* observed, "all of these [Smith supporters] were willing enough to use Watson to further the cause of their candidate, but they are rejoicing over this absence from the convention and they are making no secret of their rejoicing."[16]

On Tuesday night, James L. Anderson, Smith's campaign manager, gave the formal introduction of Smith, calling on the new governor to serve a "united white people" standing against the kind of political equality that leads to social equality which "as its proper conclusion means that the negro is the equal of the white man and justifies Booker Washington at Roosevelt's lunch table or leading John Wanamaker's daughter to dinner."

Anderson went on: "My friends, let us all press forward—as brothers running together—under the leadership of this strong man whom God has sent to us in a time of great need. . . . Let color be the line of demarcation, put it squarely here. The most illiterate white man has, through inheritance, noble conceptions and hears heavenly music, which no, neither association nor education, can make perceptible to the negro in whose soul the darkness of savagery is just beginning to fade into twilight."

Anderson continued, now underscoring the Smith-Watson campaign message that failure to disenfranchise black voters could lead to only one thing, sexual mingling of the races:

"No, the negro for ages—perhaps for always—must be the servant of the white man; he has no other place in a white man's country. He shall not aspire to equality with the white man. We must nullify—yes, repeal—this odious fifteenth amendment; else, my friends—miserable thought—the educated negro is justified in his claim of social equality with the white man and in his attentions to the white man's daughter."[17]

To cheers, Smith stepped forward to accept the nomination. He vowed to keep his promises to abolish the free pass system on railroads, a form of

bribery allotting free train travel to influential people, and to reduce special interest contributions.

But he devoted most of his speech to promising to make good on black disenfranchisement, telling the audience that he was committed to preventing Georgia from regressing to "the days of 1868 when white civilization was at stake" thanks to Reconstruction acts that gave black males the vote without restrictions (while restricting some Confederate officers and governing officials).

"The white voters of Georgia are to be given the fullest opportunity to rule in the state and to express their wishes at the ballot box," said Smith, adding, in reference to the proposed grandfather clause, that he would ensure that "as a step toward solving the race problem in Georgia, a constitutional amendment must be passed by the legislature and submitted to the people for ratification providing the protection of the ballot box so far as it can constitutionally be done, against the ignorant and purchasable negro votes."[18]

The crowd went wild.

★★★

On Wednesday, September 5, as delegates from the convention crowded onto trains to make their way back to Atlanta from Macon still heady from the Smith victory celebration, the friends and family of Laura Brown prepared for festivities of their own. Laura's wedding to the dashing young James L. Black was an extravagant affair, the kind that Laura would have chronicled in her "Happenings" gossip column in the *Independent,* a chatty page that covered the doings of Atlanta's middle- and upper-class blacks. Hundreds of guests took up every available pew in the Allen Temple A.M.E. Church, which had been liberally decorated with pots of flowers.

The guests waited almost two hours as Brown, Black, and their attendants delayed getting to the church. The ceremony, presided over by the Reverend William Fountain, was brief. Laura's friend Carrie Cox played the wedding processional on the church organ, and her best friend, Bessie

Cox, served as maid of honor. Laura wore a white silk gown and a tulle veil trimmed with orange blossoms, while Bessie was outfitted in cream silk.

After the wedding ceremony, guests visited the young couple's new home, a cottage at 223 Clarke Street, for a dinner that went late into the evening. The many gifts included a collection from Laura's fellow Sunday School board members at Allen Temple, among them Annie Green, Laura Northington, and the pastor's wife, Julia Fountain. Well-wishers and neighbors, including James Black's friend the Western Union telegraph operator Frank Smith, who lived at 234 Clarke Street, stopped by throughout the evening with congratulations and presents.[19]

The *Independent* staff surprised Laura with effusive coverage written by the city editor, E. B. Barco, who observed, "we don't remember having witnessed a more up-to-date wedding than the Brown-Black nuptials."[20]

11

A Visit from William Jennings Bryan

> "Now the thing has come to me, and it's just about ruined my life."
> —JOHN KIMMEL, October 1906, as quoted by Ray Stannard Baker, *Following the Color Line*

William Jennings Bryan and his wife, Mary, arrived at the Atlanta train station early on the morning of Thursday, September 20, and were immediately hustled to their suite at the Piedmont Hotel—rooms 112 and 113, the most elegant available.

After they settled in, the Bryans called room service and ordered breakfast: watermelon, steak, soft-boiled eggs with mayonnaise sauce, two orders of waffles, and sliced tomato. The perennial presidential candidate's breakfast choice pleased Atlanta observers. "Mr. Bryan first thought of trying cantaloupe, but the Georgia germ just at this time asserted itself and cantaloupe was scratched from the order and watermelon written in its place," crowed the *Constitution,* which reproduced Bryan's $2.25 room-service ticket on its front page as proof that the Nebraskan had indeed opted for homegrown produce.[1]

But Bryan evidently had been consuming steak and waffles more frequently than melon, or so it seemed to Hoke and Biddie Smith and other members of the welcoming committee who came to the hotel to collect the Bryans for their day of touring the city. The Atlantans noticed a dramatic change in "the great commoner's" appearance. Always stocky, Bryan now

was positively rotund. And the Nebraskan's once luxuriant black hair was thinning and graying. A reporter for the *Constitution* noted in the next morning's paper that Bryan had changed so much that "it is doubtful he will ever again by referred to as 'the lion with the shaggy mane.'"[2]

Bryan's day was tightly scheduled. First on his agenda was another meal—luncheon at the Piedmont Hotel with members of the Young Men's Democratic League, including its president, Lamar Hill.

After lunch and meetings at the downtown hotel, Hill whisked Bryan to the skating rink at Ponce de Leon Park, which served as a makeshift arena to house thousands of cheering supporters (and prompted Clark Howell to mount a new crusade: for an Atlanta civic auditorium).

While the young Democrats occupied Mr. Bryan, his wife was in the charge of Biddie Smith and members of the Atlanta Women's Club. They took Mrs. Bryan on a driving tour of the city, past new houses, parks, and developments like Ansley Park, and then lunched at the Piedmont Driving Club. Biddie Smith presided over the affair, with her daughter and the daughter of *Journal* editor James Gray as assistants. The gathering included wives of a number of Atlanta's business leaders, among them Rebecca Jones, the prohibition crusader and wife of Atlanta Chamber of Commerce president Sam Jones.[3]

At the urging of the Atlanta ladies, Mrs. Bryan made her way to the palm-tree decorated dais at front of the club dining room and offered brief remarks about the role of women and women's clubs in civic life. A *Constitution* reporter who covered the event, noted that although Mary Baird Bryan was quite famously—or perhaps, infamously—trained as an attorney, she addressed more "feminine" concerns adeptly. "Although a graduate in the law, she is also a student of household economics, and, if the servant problem pushed her to it, would no doubt willingly leave the library where she might be helping Mr. Bryan 'work out' the legal aspects of some case, to go to the kitchen to teach the western Dinah how to cook a steak."[4]

The ladies traveled to Ponce de Leon Park to hear Mr. Bryan's speech. More than seven thousand supporters of Bryan, from throughout Georgia

and as far away as Florida, packed the skating rink. In addition to Atlanta's Democratic stalwarts, party representatives from all over the state and northern Florida attended, cheering the man introduced by Reuben Arnold as "the next president of the United States." Bryan warmed up the crowd by joking that he had been asked to let them know flash cameras might be used and they shouldn't be frightened. Nonetheless, when he started to speak, dozens of camera flashes exploded and many in the crowd involuntarily jumped back in fear, startled by the bright lights and gunpowder explosions.[5]

★★★

John Kimmel and his wife, Knowles, moved to Atlanta from Pennsylvania Dutch country, like so many newcomers, drawn to the city's reputation as a place where hardworking people could make a clean start. They rented farmland from the Erskine family who, in addition to downtown shop and office space, owned a spread in Oakland, a settlement south of Atlanta, about a mile beyond the end of the streetcar line. Mr. and Mrs. Kimmel worked on their rented plot seven days a week, farming cotton and corn.

They had been in Atlanta for almost five years and started to eke a profit out of their venture. It was hard work, and the hot, Georgia summers took some getting used to, but the Kimmels had settled into the community, comfortable in their small, but neatly painted, green wooden farmhouse.[6]

On the morning of September 20, at around the same time the Bryans unpacked in their suite at the Piedmont Hotel, Knowles Kimmel worked the garden at the front of their house. She was surprised to look up and see a short, extremely dark black man wearing tattered military khakis standing in her garden. He tried to speak to her, but she ignored him, and soon he turned and left.

Mrs. Kimmel mentioned the encounter to her husband, and when he left shortly after noon for a weekly shopping trip, he asked their neighbor to keep an eye out to make sure no one bothered his wife.

A few hours later, as he walked back from the streetcar line that af-

ternoon, he could see—from a half-mile off—a crowd in front of his home, and he anticipated the worst. When he got to the house, he saw fifty men there, holding guns and knives. Rushing inside, he found Knowles, blood-spattered and shaken, doctors already at her side. As he was told that his wife had been raped, he could hear the men outside clamoring for vengeance.

Within minutes of his return, posses fanned out across south Atlanta looking for a black man wearing an old pair of khakis.[7]

★★★

Compared to the thousands that had packed the skating rink in the afternoon, a much smaller group attended the "dollar dinner" held in Bryan's honor at the Piedmont Hotel at eight thirty that evening. At the candidate's request, organizers kept the ticket price to one dollar (although attendees filled out address cards so that donation solicitations could be sent to them later). Guests had been asked to keep their attire simple and plain, befitting Bryan's man-of-the-people persona.[8]

Around midnight, a page crept into the back of the banquet hall and summoned Governor Joseph Terrell. He was needed, the messenger said, because a mob was forming in pursuit of Sheriff Nelms and his deputies, who had already captured the black man accused of assaulting Mrs. Kimmel. While Bryan's speech continued, Terrell slipped out of the banquet hall and onto Peachtree Street where officers readied to debrief him in detail.

Terrell learned that within hours of the posse leaving the Kimmel place, officers picked up a man named Charley Clayton who seemed to match Knowles Kimmel's description (at least, the officers noted, he wore military castoffs). News had spread about the arrest, and the vigilantes learned that Clayton had been taken to Fort McPherson and put under militia watch. A mob surrounded the fort, demanding an immediate lynching.

From downtown, Governor Terrell put in a call for two companies of the state militia to quell the uprising.

In the meantime, Sheriff Nelms raced to the fort accompanied by his newest citizen-deputy, Charles Daniel, the *News* editor, who had been sworn in a few days earlier. Nelms and Daniel rode in the enormous Pierce-Arrow sedan that belonged to another citizen-deputy, Renfro Jackson. They drove behind the mob and into the fort grounds, and then smuggled Charley Clayton out, bundled in the back seat.[9]

Then, at more than fifty miles an hour, Jackson drove back to the city, the mob behind them on horseback, buggy, and foot. As Daniel wrote in a front-page, bylined account of the escapade that was printed the next day, "all speed records between Atlanta and Fort McPherson were broken," and "the experience of Dr. Nelms and those with him was most exciting and considered by the sheriff very dangerous."

The Nelms party made it to the Tower and locked Clayton safely inside. Terrell arrived minutes later. The mob that had followed the Nelms party was still riled up, demanding action and gathered outside the Tower for hours, calling for immediate execution of the suspect.[10]

12

Orrie Bryan's Story

> "I have no weapon, neither pistol nor knife. I have only these hands and fingers that God gave me, but if you let me use them I can settle this case in a few minutes."
> —THE REVEREND THOMAS L. BRYAN, as quoted in the *Atlanta Constitution*, September 22, 1906

Well after midnight, the guests at the William Jennings Bryan "dollar dinner" spilled out of the Piedmont Hotel in search of cabs and drivers. They were oblivious to the commotion that had caused Terrell to leave the fund-raiser. Until they saw the next day's paper, they would be unaware of another dramatic event that had unfolded just a few blocks away—at the Courtland Street home of eighteen-year-old Orrie Bryan.

Orrie, her mother, and two sisters, Erin, thirteen, and Tommie, eleven, sat in the front room of their home at 232 Courtland Street while her father, the Reverend Thomas L. Bryan, attended a meeting at the YMCA. At around nine fifteen that evening, as Orrie would later recall, "the meanest looking negro" burst into the front room of their apartment, which occupied the bottom half of the house. Orrie's mother and sisters slipped out the back door, but Orrie was trapped, blocked by the man who was half-dressed and yelling in drunken incoherence while he waved a heavy, hobnailed shoe above his head like a weapon. Orrie finally dodged behind him and locked herself in a closet.

Mrs. Bryan's shrieks brought neighbors to the house, and a group of men tackled the intruder, wrestled him to the ground, and subdued him, just as police showed up. While Orrie stood out on the street telling her story to neighbors, investigators, and her sisters, Reverend Bryan returned. Quickly grasping what seemed to have happened, the Reverend lurched toward the intruder, bellowing for him to be lynched on the spot. Police bundled the man, who identified himself as Luther Frazier, into the patrol wagon to take him into custody, and the minister tried to climb in after them; he had darted inside to grab an axe, which he waved in the air while continuing to yell for vengeance.

More than a hundred Courtland Street neighbors, black and white, crowded into and around the Bryan home during the excitement. Mr. and Mrs. H. R. Trowbridge, who lived in the upstairs apartment above the Bryans, told reporters, police, and any of the bystanders who would listen, that they, too, had heard the commotion when Frazier entered the house.[1]

In the midst of the chaos, Orrie remained serene. The young woman, a newspaper reporter noted, "was the most composed member of the family and will make an excellent witness."[2]

★★★

First thing on Friday morning, Reverend Bryan marched to the police court, and alongside him strode Orrie, summoned to be a witness in Frazier's hearing.[3]

News of the events at the Bryan household had spread quickly. The morning *Constitution* carried a front-page, full-body photo of the svelte, attractive Orrie, along with a detailed account of the incident that praised her quick thinking and bravery. By the time Reverend Bryan and Orrie reached the police court, a crowd of three hundred or more white men had already gathered. Spectators surged into the courtroom until it overflowed; those who couldn't fit in the room squeezed near the Decatur Street entrance.

Orrie and her father made their way to the front of the courtroom

where recorder Nash Broyles sat at his bench. The railed-off witness stand was still empty.

When deputies brought Luther Frazier into the witness area, Reverend Bryan lunged forward, reaching toward the intruder who he believed had attacked his daughter less than twelve hours earlier.

"I am the girl's father and there are few men who can appreciate my feelings who have not experienced what I have," said Bryan in booming, ministerial tones. "If it is possible, I beg that I be allowed to settle this case with the negro here and now." Bryan, growing louder, walked behind the railing, heading for Frazier, yelling that even without a weapon he would be able to kill the man.[4]

The men who had packed the courtroom surged toward Bryan and the front of the courtroom; some managed to shove their way past the rail and into the witness area. Police officers formed a cordon around Frazier and thrust Reverend Bryan and the spectators back in front of the railing. Loud shouts filled the room.

Broyles, seeing the situation get more volatile, said he needed to hear a statement from the victim and then would question the suspect. The men backed away, eager to hear Orrie's account.

The crowd fell silent as Orrie Bryan stepped forward. She repeated the story she had told the night before. Frazier broke into the house, wearing no trousers and waving a heavy shoe. She dodged him and locked herself in the closet. She heard Frazier follow her mother and sisters outside and Orrie could hear him yelling at her mother, "Don't be scared honey, for I love you!"[5]

Broyles asked Frazier for his side of the story. He said that he didn't remember a thing that had happened. "I got drunk with another negro and the last thing I remember was when I was in a barroom on Decatur street. I don't remember anything about taking off a part of my clothes."[6]

The crowd erupted with calls for an immediate hanging and again menacingly moved toward the witness stand and Frazier, prompting the police officers to tighten their wall around the suspect.

Broyles, shouting over the noise of the crowd, announced that he was charging Frazier with criminal intent to assault and that the case would be bound to a higher court. He set bond at five thousand dollars and ordered Frazier taken to the Tower.

Hearing the sentence, the hundreds of white men rushed out of the courtroom, heading to the Tower to intercept the police escort and seize and lynch Frazier. Officers in the room overheard the spectators' whispered plans. Broyles ordered the officers to take Frazier out a back door and onto Butler Street. They then hustled him safely into the rear entrance of the Tower, thwarting the crowd outside.

Reverend Bryan and his daughter walked back to their home on Courtland, the crowd following them dwindling to a few dozen by the time they reached their house, just a few blocks away.

★★★

Luther Frazier's court statement that he had been drinking on Decatur Street before making his way to the Bryan home was just the fuel that Inspector Richard Ewing needed as he prepared to meet with reporters to announce his planned raid on dives and saloons in downtown Atlanta.

Ewing told the newspapermen that for several days, he and a team of plain-clothes officers had been investigating dives, clubs, and saloons in the center city. The mission was, he said, prompted in part by Pastor Henry Hugh Proctor's sermon about the evils of the dives that had been reprinted in the daily papers a few weeks earlier.

If he found evidence of criminal behavior at the dives, Ewing assured the newspapermen, he would report it to Broyles and let law enforcement take its course. What the inspection revealed so far, Ewing said, was shocking. Nude photos of white women tacked on walls. Men and women, black and white, mingling in seedy rooms. Hard liquor—some bootlegged. Drugs.

"I cannot bring myself to any other conclusion than that such practices induce assault and lawlessness," he stated.[7]

Ewing, accompanied by tax committee head Fletcher Quillian, set out to inspect the licenses of all restaurants, saloons, and clubs. Tearing down pictures was one step, he said. But real action on closing down the clubs would mean forcing all owners to pay the legal tax on selling liquor.

"This will affect the white clubs," Ewing conceded. "But that cannot be helped under the present laws. Certainly any respectable white club would be willing to pay the license rather than have the negroes inflamed by liquor and indecent pictures."[8]

13

"Extra! Extra!"

"Assault!"
—Extra editions of the *Atlanta Evening News*,
September 22, 1906

Over breakfast on the morning of Saturday, September 22, subscribers to the *Constitution* learned of a new indication that the Ku Klux Klan might still be operating in the city. The newspaper reported a KKK threat, not against blacks, but against a white city councilman, Walter Taylor, who had initiated an investigation into local butcher shops, deeming their operations unsanitary. A threatening letter, written in beef blood on parchment and signed with the initials "KKK," had been sent to the lawmaker's home. Taylor, on the advice of a friend, turned the letter over to the press, and the *Constitution* reprinted it in full.[1]

In the same edition, readers could take in plenty of salacious details about the ongoing efforts to cleanse Decatur Street of miscreants. In addition to the raids by plain-clothes officers, the addition of forty new policemen, and the city council's tough, new ruling on what constituted a "dive," License Inspector Richard Ewing announced that he would continue to inspect all bars, saloons, and dives, and would close any that operated without the proper permits.[2]

In a Saturday morning editorial, Clark Howell and the *Constitution* editorial board called for authorities to "clean out the dives!" and to "drive the loafers and vagrants to the chain gangs!" in order to reduce the "alarm-

ing number of besotted, dusky denizens" that might be causing trouble in Atlanta's streets.[3]

In the weekly issue of the *Independent* published that day, Benjamin Davis reprinted a letter that the Negro Baptist Minister's league had drafted and sent to newspapers earlier in the week. "We feel humiliated by, and disgraced because of the recent fiendish and inexcusable outbreaks and assaults by certain inhuman black brutes who happen to be connected to our race," the ministers wrote. "If our white newspaper men and citizens would more frequently visit our churches and schools and hear us teach and preach, we think they would not charge us with a derelict of duty in this respect. You may put us down with the law and order brigade of this community, first, last and forever," the ministers closed. The signatures included those of Peter James Bryant of Wheat Street Baptist and Edward R. Carter of Friendship Baptist.[4]

★★★

It was a brutal late-summer day: hot, muggy, and interrupted by the threatening rumbles of impending thunderstorms.

That morning, Isadore Jacobs, owner of a grocery store at 115 Decatur Street, hired Monroe Wellborn, a young black delivery boy, to take a block of ice to his home on Gilmer Street. Sarah Jacobs, the grocer's fifteen-year-old daughter, accepted the delivery. After Wellborn set the ice in place, Sarah said, he turned and kissed her hand. Sarah shrieked and ran to tell her family. They placed a call to the store, and Mr. Jacobs and his clerk, Nathan Goodman, waited for Welborn to come back to collect his delivery fee.

When the delivery boy failed to reappear, Jacobs and Goodman walked a few doors down to the Wheeler Saloon, where Wellborn sometimes worked. They found him there, and Jacobs leaped at the young man and wrestled him to the ground. Police were called and Wellborn summoned to appear before Recorder Broyles.

★★★

At around two that afternoon, as she would later recall, Lizzie Chafin, who lived on Flat Shoals Road in East Atlanta, went to the hog pen to feed her pigs. As she approached the pen, a black man leaped out from the nearby brush. She told him to leave; he would not. She went back into the house, and although she thought he had been frightened off, he approached her home again. She got down her husband's shotgun and fired toward him, and he ran away in the direction of swampy ground not far from the house.

When her husband, W. C. Chafin, and her brother, Will Nelms, returned to the house, Lizzie told them that the man was about twenty-five years old, wore blue overalls and a white shirt, was barefooted, and was the color of ginger cake.

Her husband and brother put out an alarm, and by four thirty, a posse patrolled East Lake and environs.

In its evening edition, the *Georgian* reported a "rumor" that a "burly negro" had attempted to attack "Mrs. Mary Chafin" and that a posse of seventy men was "rumored" to be chasing the assailant.[5]

★★★

The dive raids continued with Inspector Ewing, councilman Edmund Martin, and alderman Fletcher Quillian taking the lead. In the company of officers, they drove a police wagon up and down Decatur and Peters streets. When a newspaper reporter came to take photographs, many of the black women who had been arrested and thrown in the wagon crouched behind the driver's seat doing their best to stay out of the sight of the camera.[6]

Late that Saturday afternoon, the license committee met to review the results of their initial inspections. They announced that twenty-two restaurants or lunchrooms illegally operated as saloons and would be closed immediately. To reopen as bona fide establishments, the operators

EXTRA The Atlanta Journal. EXTRA
NEGRO ATTEMPTS TO ASSAULT MRS. MARY CHAFIN NEAR SUGAR CREEK BRIDGE
LAST EDITION EXTRA The Atlanta Journal. 2d Extra
ANGRY CITIZENS IN PURSUIT OF BLACK BRUTE WHO ATTEMPTED ASSAULT ON MRS. CHAPIN RESCUED FROM FIEND BY PASSING NEIGHBOR
-Extra-ATLANTA EVENING NEWS-Extra-
TWO ASSAULTS
3 Extra ATLANTA EVENING NEWS 3 Extra
THIRD ASSAULT

Extra editions of Atlanta papers from September 22, 1906. Reproduced from The Atlanta Riot, Ray Stannard Baker, Phillips Publishing reprint 1907, 6. Courtesy, Auburn Avenue Research Library.

would have to pass inspection and come up with the one-thousand-dollar license fee.[7]

A first case had already been tried. That Saturday morning, Charles W. Moseley, the black owner-operator of the Vendome, stood in Broyles's courtroom, charged with displaying photos of naked women, one of them a three-foot by two-foot painting. "I'll give you a comparatively light fine, Charley, on your promise to burn up these pictures" said the judge, who fined Moseley ten dollars and costs.[8]

The evening edition of the *Journal* carried an update on the inspectors' reports and a list of the operators being closed down. Among the business owners slated for closure and listed on the front page were: Rosa Edwards,

Decatur Street; Mittie Jones and Emmie Dobbs, both on Ivy Street; and Tom Young, Courtland Street.

The *Journal* also carried an editorial decrying the dives and blaming them outright for causing violence. "It has been an established fact that the negro clubs and restaurants which have been only disguised dives of the worst class, have fostered and engendered criminals of the lowest species," stated the editorial.[9]

Shortly after that regular issue came out, the *Journal* produced its first "extra" edition of the day, carrying the story of the Chafin attack on the front page. The *News* had already published an extra, also boldly splashing the Chafin story on its front page.[10]

By early evening, newsboys near Terminal Station and at corners along Peachtree Street yelled "Extra!" and waved their papers in the air.

★★★

At around seven that evening, Mattie Arnold of 127 Julian Street headed toward the back door of her home to check on a sound coming from the porch. She said that a black man sprang out of the darkness and grabbed her and knocked her down. She shrieked, and the man ran away toward the woods. Hearing the woman's call, the rest of the Arnold household raced to the back of the house, in pursuit of the would-be assailant.

Neighbors were alerted and a posse formed, heading out into the evening hoping to catch the man.

A call was also placed to the local newspapers.

★★★

Thirty minutes later, just a few blocks away, Miss Alma Allen walked toward the rear of the Davis Street house where she lived with her mother and stepfather, Henry Lancaster, a plumber. As she went out the back door, a black man grabbed her.

She shrieked, and neighbors and friends came running to her aid as the man sprinted away.

A posse was formed.

The newspapers were alerted.[11]

★★★

At nine o'clock, Mattie Holcomb, an older woman who lived at 275 Magnolia Street, went to close her blinds for the night. As she stood by her window, she was startled to see a black man looking back at her. She yelled and a call was put into the police station. After a few minutes, she called the station herself, flustered and embarrassed and saying there was no need to make a report.

But by then, officers were on their way and the papers had picked up the news.[12]

★★★

That morning, downtown Atlanta had already been crowded with out-of-town visitors who'd stayed on following the William Jennings Bryan events. As the day went on, streets and shops became even more congested as residents of surrounding rural and suburban communities made their way into the city for Saturday shopping and entertainment.

As dusk settled that evening, newsboys prowled the streets of Atlanta, weaving in and out of the crowds of tourists, shoppers, and young men and boys who had been enjoying the Saturday half-holiday. The *News* and *Journal* each published extra editions. The *Georgian* carried a front-page account of the Chafin incident. As the newsboys peddled papers, Inspector Ewing and Chief Jennings prepared for another round of raids.

Decatur and Pryor streets were more lively than usual, a *Journal* reporter later noted. The muggy air was heavy with the smell of fried mullet, a staple at the bars and lunchrooms. In the restaurants, white patrons sat at the front, drinking beer and corn whiskey, while blacks crowded into the rear,

doing the same. At the restaurant run by Andrew Poner, a recent Greek immigrant to Atlanta, guests gulped down ten-cent steaks and five-cent sandwiches.

At Langford's White Midway skating rink, the crowd was calmer and more pleasant. Shouts rang out from the rink and the merry-go-round, and laughter drifted from the minstrel show.

At around nine o'clock, the inspectors said, the Decatur Street regulars began to clear without their prompting.[13]

Rumors spread that a riot was going to start.

★★★

By nine-thirty, darkness had fallen and newsboys ran through downtown streets hawking extras with "Fourth Assault" blazoned across the front page, reporting Mattie Holcomb's story.

"Extra! Extra!" came the cry of the newsboys as they shoved their way in between the crowd. "Extra! Extra!"

14

Rage

> "Ten negroes dead—possibly even twenty-five or thirty—and half a hundred wounded is the result of a lynching fever that seized the white people of Atlanta last night."
> —*New York Times*, September 23, 1906

Late on the afternoon of Saturday, September 22, as thirteen-year-old Walter White got ready to accompany his father, George, on the postal rounds, he overheard his parents whispering in the front part of their house on Houston Street. The subject of the conversation was whether or not Walter should ride with his father. Walter was curious; he always helped with deliveries on Saturdays, and he wondered why his parents sounded so anxious. As he crept closer to listen, he heard his mother say, "I don't think they would start anything before nightfall."[1]

Who would be starting what? Walter begged to know, but as soon as they realized he was listening, his parents clammed up. Come on, let's get through the rounds, said George. So they hitched up the mustang and set off on the familiar route.

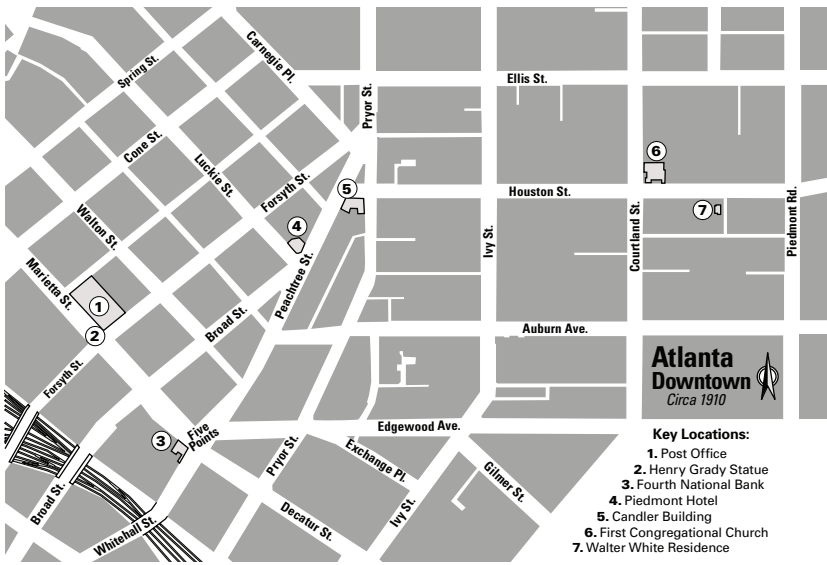
The evening's deliveries completed, they emptied the letterbox at the corner of Houston and Peachtree and headed toward the main post office so that George could drop off the collected mail, stamp his time card, and head home. It was about nine thirty; he was ready to rest and looked forward to his Sunday ritual of fancy breakfast, church, and relaxation. As

the horse clopped down Peachtree Street, Walter heard a strange sound drowning out the usual clamor of streetcars, buggies, cars, and crowds. It was a loud wave of human voices, building to a roar that seemed to come from Five Points, the city center at the intersection of Peachtree, Decatur, and Marietta streets. As the mail cart progressed south, closer to Five Points, the bellowing grew louder and louder. Terrified, Walter strained to distinguish individual words within the roar of the mob of white men and boys that he could now see gathered in Five Points and heading up Peachtree toward them.

Walter and George were startled to see someone they knew, a crippled bootblack who worked in a downtown barbershop.[2] The young man scurried across Peachtree Street, right in front of the mail cart, with a mob of white men and boys chasing him.

The words shouted by the crowd were clear now.

"Get them all! Kill the negroes!" they yelled.



Map of downtown Atlanta showing major sites of rioting

The gang of men and boys in pursuit of the bootblack outran him easily and pushed him to the sidewalk, about a hundred yards ahead of the mail wagon. Walter could see sticks and clubs slashing through the air as the white men cursed and screamed; a few minutes later, they turned and moved on, heading up Peachtree Street. As the mail wagon passed the spot where the victim had been surrounded by the mob, Walter could see the bootblack's body limp on the sidewalk; many years later he would recall the most vivid detail, "a withered foot in a pool of blood."

George White yanked on the reins and urged his horse away from the city center and the crowd and north toward Houston Street. Please Dad, don't turn around, Walter urged. Let's at least go down to Five Points and see what's happening. Crowds of white men and boys raced along the sidewalks. Walter could hear them screaming, "Get them all! Get them all!" In the chaos, buggies, cars, and cabs raced through the streets. A funeral barouche driven by a white driver flew by, nearly colliding with George's wagon. Looking into the funeral carriage, Walter saw three black passengers in the rear, clinging to the cart with fear in their eyes, watching the crowd pursuing them.

We're going home, said George.

As they headed home an old woman who lived in their neighborhood ran down the street as though she were being hunted. Quick, let's help her up, George ordered. He handed the reins to Walter, and then reached down and lifted the woman into the cart. The mob followed, drawing closer. Walter whipped the horse into a gallop and they made their way to Houston Street.

★★★

No one knows who committed the first act of violence.[3]

Around eight that evening, a mob had started to form near Five Points. White men clustered in small groups, discussing the news reports. Talk of lynching circulated from group to group. There were rumors that posses would be formed. Teenage boys mingled with the men and joined in the

rough talk. One man climbed up on a dry-goods box in front of a Five Points shop, copies of the newspaper extras in his hand.

"Are we white men going to stand for this?" he shouted, gesturing at the headlines that screamed, "Assault!"

"No!" rang back a chorus from the crowd.

The talk grew more heated. The mob grew as rural residents coming into town for shopping trips and passengers getting off the streetcars moved toward the crowd, curious about what was going on. All the while, newsboys moved in and out of the horde, continuing to sell special editions of the *Journal* and *News* and the evening edition of the *Georgian*. Their yells of "Extra!" and "Four assaults!" mingled with the mob cries of "Kill the negroes!"

At around nine thirty, Mayor Woodward climbed onto the same dry-goods box, held his hat in his hand, and yelled out over the sound of the crowd, pleading with them to remain calm.

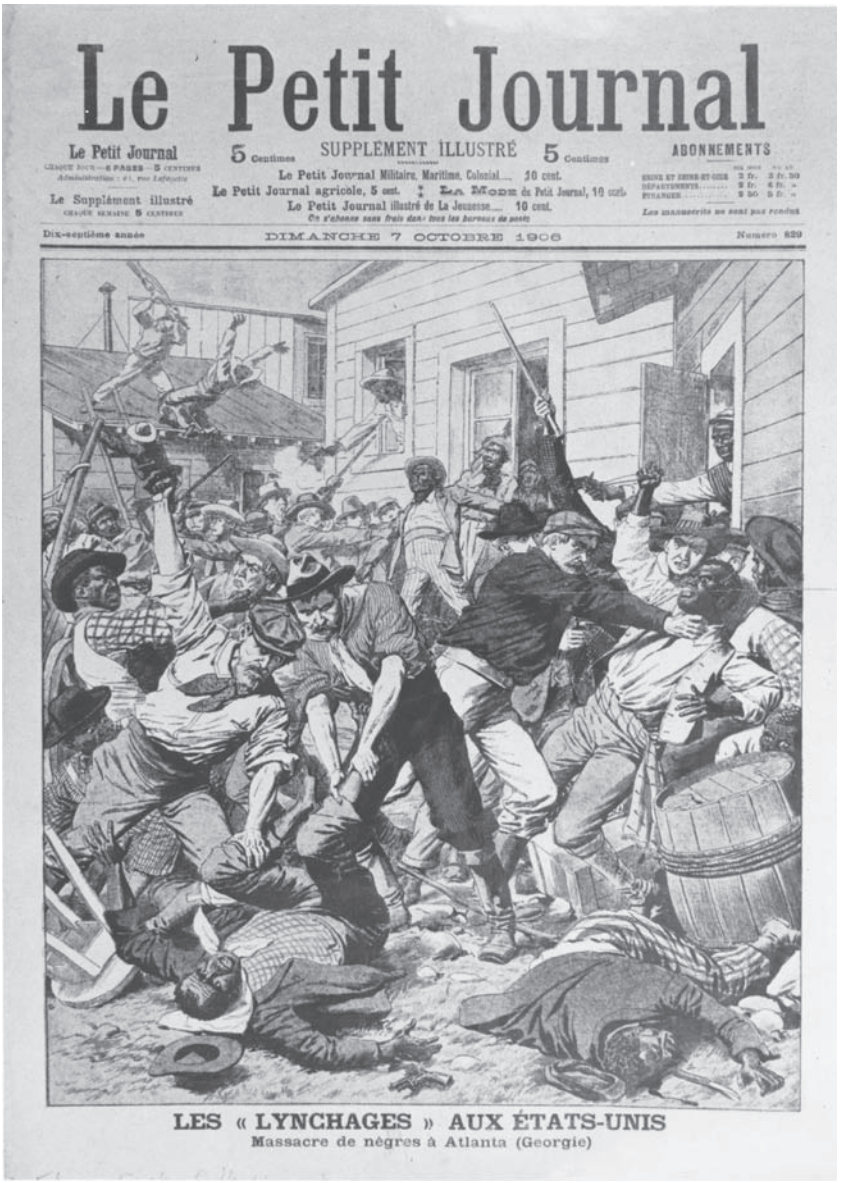
"For God's sake, men, go to your homes quietly and leave this matter in the hands of the law," Woodward yelled. "I promise you that every negro shall receive justice and the guilty shall not escape."[4]

"Go home, Jim!" a voice rang out. "We're going to get some niggers!"[5]

★★★

At least five thousand white men and boys swarmed the streets of downtown Atlanta that Saturday. The throng surged from Five Points in all directions, spilling down side streets and in and out of buildings as they hunted for black people. At first, the mob threw stones and bricks through windows. Tom Weaver's tailor shop was ransacked. Rocks went through Alonzo Herndon's glittering barbershop windows at 66 Peachtree. Then the rioters began to attack blacks with makeshift weapons, using clubs and fists on victims like the bootblack. As the mob grew more bloodthirsty and violence escalated, there was a rush to buy weapons; one hardware store sold more than sixteen hundred guns that night.

George White's instinct to avoid the main post office would prove wise.


Le Petit Journal
Le Petit Journal
Le Supplément illustré
5 Centimes
SUPPLÉMENT ILLUSTRÉ
5 Centimes
Le Petit Journal Militaire, Maritime, Colonial.... 10 cent.
Le Petit Journal agricole, 5 cent.
La Mode du Petit Journal, 10 cent.
Le Petit Journal illustré de La Jeunesse.... 10 cent.
ABONNEMENTS
Dix-septième année
DIMANCHE 7 OCTOBRE 1906
Numéro 829
LES « LYNCHAGES » AUX ÉTATS-UNIS
Massacre de nègres à Atlanta (Georgie)

Front page of French newspaper. Illustration courtesy, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

The largest crowd of whites gathered there. A black man dodged through the crowd and ducked behind the statue of Henry Grady on Marietta Street. The man was grabbed, pulled back into the street, and held down by some white men as others beat him viciously until he died. The man's body was dragged back to the Grady statue and flung across its base.

Explosions rang out from Leland's Barbershop on Peachtree Street. The mob stormed into the shop, guns held aloft. Rioters clubbed storeowner Henry Leland. Two black barbers, cutting their white clients' hair, continued their work. They were shot in the back of their heads at point-blank range. Rioters then dragged the bodies of the black barbers out into the street and to the Grady statue. There, they arranged the three corpses in a grisly tableau at the foot of the memorial honoring the man who claimed, just ten years before, that Atlanta was the center of the New South, and that the old hatred was gone. Blood from the bodies drained out onto the pavement of Marietta Street while the crowd of whites continued to hunt down blacks, their calls echoing through the streets of Atlanta.

"Get them all!"

"Kill them all!"[6]

★★★

Around ten o'clock, fire chief Walthall "Cap" Joyner led a squadron of firefighters into Decatur Street, the fire wagon and its hoses forging through the agitated men and boys. At Joyner's command, the firefighters directed high-pressure gusts of water into the crowd. The drenching did little to quell the mad rage of the rioters, who simply broke into smaller groups and headed away from the center of the city. Some went north on Peachtree toward Houston Street and Auburn Avenue, the routes into the black neighborhood of Darktown. Others raced west toward the black businesses and homes on Peters Street. Others went east, past Joyner and the firefighters and into the heart of the bars along Decatur Street. A final group made

their way south, toward the main train station. Along the way, smaller packs splintered off, attacking blacks on the streetcars.

Police officers on the streets that night did little to stop the violence. Some witnesses later said they saw officers join in the melee.[7]

Sheriff John Nelms said that he learned about the fighting when newspaper reporters came to his home shortly after ten. He claimed that his phone wires had been cut; he had not received any calls alerting him about the riot.[8]

★★★

Tax collector Henry Rucker and his son holed up in a downtown office that night, while his wife, Annie, and daughter, Lucy, stayed in their home on Piedmont Avenue. On Sunday Rucker put his wife and children on a train to Macon.[9]

★★★

One cluster of rioters ran up Peachtree, headed toward the Piedmont Hotel. Along the way they shattered windows and chased black workers leaving the downtown hotels and restaurants. When they got to the front of the Piedmont, Captain English, who had been out patrolling the streets since he was first called about the riot, stood in front of the hotel doors and pleaded with them to stop. But the white men and boys kept on.

Rioters stabbed several black pedestrians in view of the hotel as horrified guests looked down from their luxurious rooms above. A group of white men grabbed a black man, then while some held him down others hit his head with glass bottles and others used knives to hack into his body. After a quarter-hour of this torture, others in the watching crowd yelled for the man to be burned or killed. Men with axes killed the black man and then rioters moved in, grabbing pieces of his clothes as souvenirs. Someone chopped off the man's fingers and toes.[10]

★★★

As word of the riot spread, black Atlantans ran for refuge. On Decatur Street, more than five hundred black men, women, and children who just a few hours earlier had been enjoying the attractions at Langford's White Midway, crowded into the amusement park's skating rink, barricading themselves in.

Grady Hospital overflowed with dead and injured; a makeshift clinic had been set up at police headquarters, crowded with black Atlantans who had headed there for refuge.

Hundreds of calls came in to the station, most from panicked white residents demanding protection from rumored black retaliation. Officers raced into the streets, leaving the headquarters understaffed. Phones rang and rang, and calls went unanswered. Crowds of morbidly curious onlookers added to the chaos as they peered into the police station to get glimpses of the dying and wounded black victims.[11]

Shortly past midnight, governor-elect Hoke Smith took his buggy to Terminal Station to meet a friend. Wait for me, he told his driver, and walked into the depot. When Smith returned to the curb, his driver, the buggy, and the team were gone, presumably chased off by the mob. All the other hacks and cabs had fled the station, and Smith headed out on foot to his home at 645 Peachtree Street, roughly three miles away.[12]

★★★

Earlier in the evening, finishing their act at the Bijou, members of Al Field's Minstrel Troupe considered heading to the train station while still in blackface makeup. "We'd better not, seeing how these people in Atlanta have been riled up," joked one performer, and so they stopped to remove the heavy makeup. As their car made its way from the theater to the station, it was surrounded by a gang of whites, who peered into the wagon, looking for black faces.[13]

★★★

With fewer blacks on the streets, the white rioters actively went into black neighborhoods, hunting for victims. A group of rioters headed away from Five Points, crossing the viaducts at Whitehall and Forsyth Streets, moving in the direction of the black-owned businesses on Peters Street.[14]

One group of white men and boys passed Frank Smith, the Western Union messenger and friend of James Black, Laura Brown's new husband. Smith was crossing the Forsyth Street viaduct. The rioters stoned Smith to death. After he was killed, they threw his body over the side of the bridge.[15]

The Detroit, a black barbershop at 47 Peters Street, was ransacked. Rocks thrown through the windows hit barbers and the customers seated in their chairs.

Inside Mattie Adams's restaurant at 197 Peters Street, the matriarch, her grandson, and her daughter barricaded the doors in an effort to keep away the frenzied attackers. Rocks hurtled through windows and the white men and boys forced their way in. Leading them was George Blackstock, who crashed into the restaurant carrying a heavy wagon-wheel spoke. Mattie and Alice fought the best they could, using pans as makeshift shields, but Blackstock shoved the pans aside and clubbed Mattie with the spoke. As Mattie fell to the floor, she could see another rioter firing shots at her young grandson, making the boy race through the house for his life.[16]

Leaving Mattie Adams's restaurant, Blackstock and his gang moved down Peters Street, using the wagon spokes as battering rams to break into black homes and businesses. Other packs of white men and boys on the street battered the window of Pearson & McCarley's hardware store and grabbed guns and ammunition.

The rioters turned and headed back the way they had come when Milton Brown, a black man who worked as a messenger for the Stocks Coal Company, crossed Peters from a side street. Shouts rang out that a black had been spotted and guns fired rapidly; Brown's flesh was torn from his body by the barrage of bullets. He dragged himself to a doorway. An

ambulance was called, but there was none available. A police officer stationed himself near Brown's body, keeping Blackstock and his crew from butchering it for souvenirs.

★★★

Some of the most hideous brutality took place on the streetcars, as the mob attacked unsuspecting black passengers returning home from work or shopping. The trolley headed west on Marietta Street paused briefly in front of Anderson Company's Hardware store at the corner of Peachtree and Marietta, and whites gathered on the street glimpsed six black men and four black women inside. "Take 'em off!" they cried.

For a moment, the engine revved again and it seemed the car might go on, but a swell of white men and boys moved into its path and knocked the streetcar from its tracks. Rioters smashed the windows and surged inside the cabin. They hit the black women on the head and shoulders, but allowed them to escape. The black men were bludgeoned more fiercely. All

Atlanta streetcar, circa 1910.

but one got away from the crowd. The last black man, known as Evans, was only eighteen. He ran ahead of the crowd, but they cornered him in an alley. Twenty white men and boys clustered around and rained blows on Evans with sticks, attacking more frantically as he tried to pull a knife in self-defense. Evans was beaten so badly that reporters said he looked like a "pulp." The crowd ran on, leaving Evans to die on the sidewalk.

Car 207, heading east toward Grant Park, was overpowered by rioters who clambered onto the roof and cut the electric lines. Others swarmed through the windows, and when they got in the car, bludgeoned the blacks trapped inside. Black women caught inside fought back with the only weapons at hand; one used an umbrella, another a hatpin. When the driver attempted to climb on the roof and re-engage the power, the mob pulled him down. When a police officer tried to intervene, he too was beaten. After a long struggle, the driver finally regained control of the car and sped out of town at twenty miles an hour, hoping to outrace the rioters. When he reached the end of the line and stopped the car; he found that three black men in the car had been beaten to death and two women badly injured.

From the windows of the *Constitution* offices at the corner of Marietta and Forsyth, reporters looking down could see two black men and two women in a car headed north on Forsyth Street. Rioters leaped into the car, allowed the women out, and shot the two men to death.[17]

★★★

At midnight, the noise woke Evelyn Witherspoon, a ten-year-old girl whose family lived downtown.

"What is it?" she asked her mother and aunt, who tried to hush her and send her back to bed.

Evelyn crept to the window and looked out, where she saw a group of white men string a black man up to a light pole. As he hung there, other men opened fire, filling his body with bullets.

"I will never forget that, as long as I live," she said years later.[18]

Militia patrol the streets of downtown Atlanta during the riot. Photograph courtesy, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

★★★

The riot alarm—fifteen sounds of the bell—was not given until shortly before midnight.[19]

It was only after the alarm sounded that Governor Joseph Terrell called for state militia to come to Atlanta. Terrell, who just a few days before had been ready to call out the militia when violence was threatened following the arrest of Charley Clayton, claimed that he had slept through the outbreak of violence the night of September 22, and was only informed when a newspaper reporter called him at eleven.

The police had no control of the city. When the mayor sounded the riot call, all police rushed to headquarters, leaving no local patrols. Officers reporting for duty said they had seen bodies lying in gutters in the streets.

At close to two thirty in the morning, the first one hundred troops

arrived. They found Atlanta in a state of confusion. The militia set up impromptu headquarters at the Elkin-Watson Drug Store at Five Points, and squads headed out along Decatur, Marietta, and Peters streets. Rioters lingering in the city center loudly jeered the militia; some fired guns at the soldiers. Captain English, who had been patrolling the city on foot all night, as had Mayor Woodward, urged the men to stop.

A heavy rainstorm that started at around two did more to clear the streets than the arrival of the troops.

★★★

In the quietest, darkest hours of that night, black Atlantans crept back into the streets and removed the bodies of their dead friends and family members. Wagons carried the corpses out of town for burial. Black Atlantans feared that if the bodies weren't removed quickly, the murders would be followed by the ritual outcome of many lynchings — mutilation followed by public cremation.[20]

15

Fighting Back

> "In a voice as quiet as though he were asking me to pass him the sugar at the breakfast table, he said, 'Son, don't shoot until the first man puts his foot on the lawn and then—don't you miss.'"
> —WALTER WHITE, *A Man Called White*

On Sunday morning, Walter White and his father cautiously made their way outside and walked to Peachtree Street to see what condition the city was in. They saw tatters of shirts, caps, and jackets that had belonged to black victims of the mob—now hanging from lampposts and street signs, totems of the massacre displayed "like skulls in a cannibal's hut," as Walter would later write.[1]

During the Sunday service at First Church, worshippers talked of the riot and nothing else. Less than half of the congregation was present; most black Atlantans would stay home for days. Already, rumors spread that hundreds, possibly thousands, had already packed their things and abandoned their homes and jobs to leave Atlanta for good.

★★★

Police estimated that more than five thousand white men and boys had participated in the mob violence the night before. On Sunday, police arrested just five white men for rioting: D. J. Kinnery, a railroad clerk;

E. J. McDaniel, a student; Creighton Liscoy, a cement worker; Sam Lockbridge, a railroad worker; and Simon Goizier, a carpenter.[2]

As daylight broke, the militia continued to patrol downtown Atlanta. Many white residents who lived outside the city center learned of the riot in the morning papers or at early church services and headed downtown to gawk at the destruction. At around ten thirty, it looked as though a second mob might be forming. A crowd—some presumably rioters still awake from the night before, and others curiosity seekers flocking into the city—gathered at Peachtree and Marietta and hissed and jeered at the soldiers who had set up makeshift headquarters at the intersection. The militia soldiers held their guns level, pointed directly at the clusters of men and boys who taunted them from across the street.[3]

The militia's presence could not quell the bloodlust of the night before. A call went out among the assembled rabble that the new goal was to lynch black staff in the luxurious downtown hotels. A group of whites chased one black man into the Kimball Hotel. They then passed the Piedmont Hotel and tried to force their way in to shoot at black waiters who could be seen through the hotel windows. The soldiers fought them off, and the mob then scattered away from the center of the city and toward the nearby black residential areas, such as Darktown and the Fourth Ward.

Throughout the day calls came in from panicked white residents of Atlanta's suburbs. Governor Terrell summoned more troops, who began to arrive in Atlanta around noon, coming from as far away as Macon. By the end of that Sunday, more than six hundred soldiers patrolled the city. Commanders dispatched troops throughout Atlanta to quell white residents' fear, not to protect black Atlantans. Officers dispatched squads into black residential and business areas to suppress reported retaliation.

Governor Terrell insisted that there was no need to declare martial law. He said that he and the Atlanta authorities, along with Colonel Anderson, would monitor the situation and respond accordingly.

On Sunday evening, the city's police commission, led by Captain

English, held an emergency meeting. They chastised Chief Jennings for the officers' lack of response to the riot and inability to control the mob.

That night Mayor Woodward issued a statement that Atlanta would be under total prohibition until things calmed down. All saloons — white and black — were ordered to remain closed on Monday. No one could purchase liquor from a retailer or wholesaler without a prescription, which the mayor himself would have to approve.[4]

★★★

The Atlanta newspapers decried the violence, but placed the blame on its black victims. In a page-one editorial, the *Journal* called the massacre "an inevitable harvest of unbridled crime," saying the black assaults of white women clearly triggered the violence. The *Journal* called for Governor Terrell to "put a bayonet at the side of every unprotected woman," and for the authorities to "keep the negroes off the streets."[5]

The *News'* editorial page carried a diatribe blaming Atlanta's black population for provoking the aggression and bewailing a lack of "justice" against black criminals. "That it is possible for one of these black devils to assault and almost kill a white woman, practically within a stone's throw of the heart of the city, and make good his escape seems incredible. It is enough to fill the heart of every white citizen of this community with a desire for vengeance," wrote the editors.[6]

Clark Howell and the *Constitution* editors described the riot as "one of the most terrible since the days of Reconstruction." But even this, the city's most moderate paper, also said the riot's cause was "recent criminal assaults made by brutal negroes on defenseless white women" — never mind that each of the four incidents reported on Saturday, September 22, was nothing more than a white woman being startled by a black man.[7] Of all the incidents reported during August and September, in only two cases was there any evidence of actual physical harm. Ethel Lawrence had clearly been gravely injured in the attack near Copenhill and Knowles Kimmel

had been physically injured and sexually assaulted at her farm in Oakland.[8] And in only one of those cases was there any corroborating witness account that the assailant had been a black man: Mabel Lawrence's testimony about seeing the man who attacked her aunt.

The Atlanta riot became a national news story, and readers from New York to San Francisco read front-page stories about the events in their Sunday papers, all of which repeated the Atlanta papers' erroneous claims that an actual rash of assaults had taken place on September 22. "Assaults on White Women Arouse Georgia Citizens," declared the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*. "Bloody Race Riot at Atlanta, Ga.," announced the *New Orleans Daily-Picayune.* "Atlanta Mob Kill 10 Negroes," reported the *New York Times,* stating that the mob had killed at least twenty-five blacks in a case of white "lynching fever."

That afternoon, the *New York World* cabled Mayor Woodward asking for a statement about his plans to remedy the situation.

The mayor cabled back (and copied his reply to the white Atlanta papers). "The only remedy is to remove the cause," wrote the mayor. "As long as black brutes attempt rape upon our white women, just so long will they be unceremoniously dealt with."[9]

★★★

At their funeral home on Broad Street, Lucius Lee and his sons Lucius Jr. and Charles (who just a week before had witnessed the birth of a son, Charles Jr.), busily tended to four bodies that had been brought in overnight.

One was Annie Lee Sheppard, a fourteen-year-old girl whose body had been found on West Third Street, a bullet in her heart. The coroner stopped by the funeral home to look at the corpse and ruled her death to be caused by bullet wounds, presumably caused during the rioting. He did not recommend any further investigation and left the Lees to take care of the burials.[10]

★★★

The *Journal* called Sunday a "day and night of intense uneasiness" as Atlantans of both races remained home, seized by "profound dread" and fearful that more violence would erupt.[11]

Walter Foote and his family remained in their house all day, waiting by the phone for news, and keeping watch. "We stayed in on account of the riot," Walter wrote in his journal that night. "A lot of innocent negros [sic] were killed. . . . Militia all out and things quiet after the shame of a lot of cowards."[12]

On edge, white Atlantans anticipated a second wave of violence and retaliation from blacks. Rumors spread as neighbors and family members telephoned each other with snippets of news, or, more often, gathered on sidewalks or front porches to talk about what they had heard through the grapevine or read in the papers. The *Journal, Constitution,* and *News* carried page after page of riot coverage. (The *Georgian* did not publish on Sunday.)[13]

On Jackson Street, Eugene Mitchell and his neighbors held a whispered conversation about the counterattacks rumored to be planned for that night. Late that night, checking his home before going to bed, Eugene was surprised to see his five-year-old daughter, Margaret, sitting in the front room, holding a heavy Civil War sword that belonged to the family.[14]

★★★

At around eight thirty on Sunday evening, C. P. Hollingsworth, a white man who lived at 350 Highland Avenue, was riding home on the streetcar accompanied by his infant daughter's nurse, a black woman, who carried the baby girl in her arms. As the streetcar stopped in front of the Candler Building, the nurse, seated with two other black women, caught the eye of a group of whites standing on the sidewalk.

The men, all heavily armed, swarmed onto the trolley and tried to grab

the nurse. Hollingsworth got up, grabbed his daughter, and with the baby still in his arms, pleaded with the men to let the nurse go. All the while the trolley still moved on.

As the car reached the intersection of Courtland Street, gunfire rang out and the trolley's windows shattered. The armed men clambered off the car and the passengers crouched in their seats, waiting for the shooting to stop.[15]

Following this incident and reports that blacks were attacking streetcars, trolley operators refused to drive Sunday night. According to reports in the newspapers, blacks threw rocks at the trolleys running through Inman Park. The conductors on the streetcars opened fire on the attackers with revolvers.[16]

★★★

In the early evening hours, the police station continued to be flooded with calls. In the two-hour span between seven thirty and nine thirty, reports of small skirmishes came in from: Copenhill, Reynoldstown, Piedmont Avenue, Glenn Street, Pittsburg, the Standard Oil Company, Courtland Street, Whittier Mills, Ridge Avenue, Pryor Street, Whitehall Street, McDaniel Street, and West Peachtree Place.

In the fighting at McDaniel Street a black man, Luther McGhee, was reportedly shot and injured.[17]

★★★

By ten on Sunday evening, with streetcars shut down and hundreds of soldiers patrolling Atlanta, it seemed as though the city had settled into an uneasy calm.

In the black community of Brownsville, which adjoined Gammon Theological Seminary and Clark College, tensions ran high.

In the big hall at Gammon, president W. E. Bowen kept watch along with his neighbor, Dr. William Penn. Bowen opened the college build-

ings as shelter for nearby residents. Postmaster Luther Price, who had a stockpile of guns, sold and loaned weapons to his neighbors. Bowen stayed awake for days, not even pausing to change clothes, expecting a surprise attack at any moment. That Sunday night, he called the police station, asking for protection for the women and children huddled in the Gammon class buildings, but no police were sent.[18]

★★★

Late that Sunday night, friends of George and Madeline White came to their home and warned the Whites that white men planned to attack Darktown and other black neighborhoods that evening. Jim Crow laws prohibited blacks from owning guns, but Walter and his father, with the protection of their light skin, had gone out to buy guns during the day. First Church deacon John Wesley Dobbs, a railway mail clerk, had his government-issued pistol. Other friends of theirs owned smuggled guns, brought into the city hidden in rags, caskets, and lumber wagons.

On Auburn Avenue, John Wesley Dobbs sat at the door of his home, his gun ready to fire at any interlopers. He would stay home for the next few days, forcing himself awake so he could watch over his young wife, Irene, and her sister and brother-in-law.[19]

A few blocks away on Houston Street, the Whites hid in their home—Madeline and the girls in the back room, Walter and his father at the second-story windows. Their house was dark, but the streetlights on Houston glowed, revealing a group of armed men and boys coming down the street, headed toward Darktown.

There was an explosion and crash, and the streetlights were shot out.

In the total darkness, Walter could hear a familiar voice, a son of their neighborhood grocer, a storeowner from whom his mother had bought food for years.

"That's where that nigger mail carrier lives!" the boy yelled. "Let's burn it down! It's too nice for a nigger to live in!"

George White turned toward his son and in his usual calm and deliber-

ate manner said, "Son, don't shoot until the first man puts his foot on the lawn and then—don't you miss."

As Walter and George waited in the eerie darkness they could hear the white attackers drawing closer. Suddenly shots rang out from down the street; the shots had been fired by friends of theirs barricaded in a brick building. The whites scattered as gunfire peppered the night; the black residents of Darktown were fighting to save their lives.[20]

★★★

Sunday night, the violence migrated from Atlanta to the suburb of East Point. Zeb Long, a black man about thirty years old, who had been arrested for carrying a shotgun, was locked in a wooden overnight shelter, awaiting transport to the Tower in Atlanta. Late at night, a group of whites broke into the shelter, removed Long, and hung him from a pine tree.

East Point residents who left their homes on Monday morning saw Long's body dangling from the tree.[21] There was little doubt that this was a message, like the display of victims' clothes from the lampposts on Peachtree Street.

16

Attack on Brownsville

> "Not much business going on. Everyone more or less excited—and all arming."
> —WALTER FOOTE, diary entry, September 24, 1906

When the riot broke out, professor W. E. B. Du Bois was in Alabama conducting research for a sociology project. As soon as the news of the violence reached him, Du Bois got on the first train back to Atlanta, where his wife, Nina, and his daughter, Yolande, were at home in their rented house on the Atlanta University campus.

As the train made its way across Alabama and West Georgia, Du Bois composed a poem decrying the tragedy. In the call-and-response format of a classic church hymn, "Litany of Atlanta" was a cry of anguish laced with bitter recognition that no amount of educational achievement or business success could erase the prejudice of skin color:

> A city lay in travail, God our Lord, and from her loins sprang twin Murder and Black Hate. Red was the midnight; clang, crack and cry of death and fury filled the air and trembled underneath the stars when church spires pointed silently to Thee. And all this was to sate the greed of greedy men who hide behind the veil of vengeance!
> *Bend us Thine ear, O Lord!*
>
> In the pale, still morning, we looked upon the dead. We stopped our ears and held our leaping hands, but they—did they not wag their heads and leer and

cry with bloody jaws: *Cease from Crime!* The word was mockery, for thus they train a hundred crimes while we cure one.
Turn again our captivity, O Lord![1]

When he got back into Atlanta on Monday, September 24, Du Bois—the New England intellectual who had never handled a firearm and said he was repulsed by the thought of hunting, and couldn't even stand to see a chicken slaughtered—bought a shotgun and two dozen rounds. For the next few days, he patrolled campus buildings, staying up at night with the weapon over his knees as he sat in a doorway, defending his wife and the university's students and staff.[2]

★★★

On Monday, the courts were busy. But prosecuting the few white rioters who had been taken into custody was not a priority.

A judge handed down formal indictments in cases in which white women claimed to have been attacked. Robert Branham, arrested and identified by Mabel and Ethel Lawrence, was charged with assault. Luther Frazier, the man found outside the Bryan home on September 20, was charged with attempted assault on Orrie Bryan. Both men were slated to go on trial in October.

In the police court, Will Mobley, a young black man, was fined ten dollars by recorder Broyles for attacking a newspaper boy during the riots.

Lonzo Humphries, a black man who had been in front of a saloon Saturday night and did not move when asked to by a police officer, was fined five dollars for impudence.[3]

★★★

On Monday afternoon, a funeral was held in Frank Smith's home at 234 Clarke Street, just a few doors down from Laura and James Black's cottage. Smith, the Western Union messenger who had been stoned to death

on the Forsyth Street viaduct, was one of six children. Smith's funeral was led by William Fountain, the pastor of Allen Temple who had officiated at Laura and James's wedding ceremony, and John Rush, pastor of Central Avenue Congregational Church. Both Rush and Fountain lived on Clarke Street, too.

The ceremony was conducted at Smith's mother's home. After the service, friends and colleagues headed from Clarke Street to South-View Cemetery. Smith's friends served as pallbearers, among them James Black, who less than three weeks earlier had celebrated his marriage to Laura Brown.[4]

In the next week's issue of the *Independent*, Laura allowed her new husband space in her "Atlanta Happenings" column to discuss Smith's death. Black wrote: "On Saturday night last, a mob of poor white crackers caught our friend Frank Smith on the Forsyth Street bridge and stoned him to death. . . . It was said in one of the white papers that he was a self-important 'colored gentleman,' meaning that he thought more of himself than anyone thought of him, but it was only a mistake. Frank, as we all called him, was not like the majority of people, self-conceited because he was well thought of, but he thought of nothing else but to treat everybody alike and alright. . . . He was the favorite child among six in the family."[5]

★★★

On Monday, Captain English, Mayor Woodward, and the police chief patrolled Atlanta's streets from early in the morning until late at night. With bars closed, many businesses still shuttered, most school children forced to stay home, and militia on guard, the city was eerily silent.

Most black Atlantans stayed home from work. Walter Foote, who opened his printing business briefly, noted in his diary that night that although he'd heard "rumors" of a total work stoppage, "our negros [sic] showed up for work—at home and office." With other businesses shut and city residents barricaded in their homes, the city was quiet, Foote noted.

In addition to prohibiting alcohol sales, Mayor Woodward issued a ban

on any young boys being out in the street past eight o'clock in the evening without notes giving them permission.

On Monday afternoon, authorities summoned Dr. Carnes, the city humane officer, for a strange assignment. Mayor Woodward's shuttering of the city's saloons yielded an unpredictable result. Each bar housed at least one cat, kept on the premises to ward off mice and rats. Trapped in the bars, the cats let out a chorus of meows that could be heard up and down Decatur Street.

Dr. Carnes was dispatched to bring food and water to the tabbies, stopping at more than two hundred establishments that first day. "The cats have not as yet learned my footsteps," Carnes told the *Constitution*. "But if the embargo on bars is not lifted in a few days, I am satisfied they will."[6]

★★★

Over the first two days of the riot, most of the violence was concentrated in the city center. But by Monday evening, reports had reached the residents of Brownsville, a black community south of downtown and adjacent to the black colleges and seminaries, that whites planned an attack.[7]

Brownsville was a quiet community of about fifteen hundred residents. The little town had its own post office (run by Atlanta's first black postmaster), school (erected and maintained by funds contributed by the residents), and a number of shops, professional businesses, and restaurants—but no saloons. The town was on the other side of the lake from Lakewood, the suburban white community where the Poole family lived. There had been some spats as whites tried to keep Brownsville's residents from using the lake, but other than that, Brownsville had maintained a very low profile, thanks to its isolation from white-dominated downtown and the close-in suburbs. Brownsville's working, middle-class, and professional residents enjoyed a degree of independence that other blacks in Jim Crow Atlanta could only imagine.

On Monday evening, some Brownsville men stood sentry in front of

their homes while women and children kept watch from windows. Others gathered in the streets to talk about possible defense.

Looking up, the men who were gathered in the street saw a group of white men and boys approaching the neighborhood. One or two, including Fulton County officer James Heard, rode horses, but most proceeded on foot. In the dusky haze, the group, which marched without police horses, wagons, or cars, looked like another band of rioters (and indeed, "deputized" regular citizens were in the company).

Without preamble, the white men began going door-to-door, looking for weapons. They stopped the group of black men on the street.

In the confusion, shots were fired, Officer Heard was killed, and several white men were wounded.

The remaining members of the white militia arrested six black residents of Brownsville that night. They marched their captives to the streetcar to transport them to Atlanta. Two of the black men, Wiley Brooks and Sam McGruder, jumped out of the trolley when it stopped at Crew Street and attempted to run away. A rain of bullets tore apart their bodies. The scene was so horrific that Mrs. Robert Thompson, a pregnant white woman who watched from her front porch, dropped dead, reportedly from a heart attack brought on by the shocking scene.

★★★

The militia decided to raid Brownsville, but to wait until Tuesday morning because they were unsure of how many of the residents were armed and they feared loss of more officers. Announced in bold type on the front of the morning *Constitution*, the raid drew onlookers as well as the militia forces and white citizens "deputized" by Colonel Clifford Anderson, to Brownsville.

The raid started before the sun rose.

As the soldiers made their way through the community, they forced their way into homes and the college buildings. Gammon Seminary presi-

dent W. E. Bowen was hit on the head with a rifle butt. The boisterous but popular Frank Fambro, who owned a grocery store and two houses, was shot to death. George Wilder, a seventy-year-old black man who had fought in the Civil War, was slashed to death with a knife; his body was found in a shed behind Fambro's shop.

The officers ransacked houses looking for weapons. Ten men came to Dr. William Penn's home on Ridge Avenue; some of them his former patients. The men went from room to room, as Penn's daughter followed them, calling, "Please, don't kill my father!" Penn tried to leave out of the back of the house and was followed by a group of angry whites. He flagged down a passing automobile and got a ride into the city and safety.

By noon, the militia and deputies had rounded up 257 black residents of Brownsville. They decided to send seventy to the Tower as witnesses and suspects. The arrestees included Gammon president Bowen.

Ruby Owens, a young wife, saved her husband by hiding his gun under their bed and persuading him to put on one of her dresses and disguise himself as a woman. As she watched from her doorway, men from her community, husbands and sons of her friends, were dragged toward the stockade in Atlanta. Among the group in police custody she spotted her brother.

17

Negotiations

> "The riot and the unsettled conditions here make us feel we can never hope to have [a home] in this ungodly section."
> —ADRIENNE HERNDON, in a letter to Booker T. Washington, February 12, 1907

At the same time that police arrested dozens of Brownsville residents, a select group of black leaders prepared to meet with the mayor and city council.

The meeting had been requested by black leaders, chief among them presumably Alonzo Herndon, whose Peachtree Street barbershop had been vandalized. Although he'd opened for business on Monday, few employees came to work and even fewer customers made their way downtown for barbering services. And now on top of tragedy at work and a potential business disaster, Herndon faced a crisis at home; his wife, Adrienne, was threatening to leave Atlanta and take their son, Norris, up north because she feared for their lives.

In the morning edition that Tuesday, the *Constitution* carried a notice that a meeting was scheduled for eleven at city council chambers, and that its attendance would be restricted to "prominent citizens." To keep curious onlookers—or perhaps those with more violent intentions—at bay, the *Constitution* underscored the exclusivity of the meeting, noting that, "only those invited may attend."

In addition to Herndon, Mayor Woodward invited six other black leaders: Bishop Henry McNeal Turner; Bishop J. H. Holsey; First Church pastor Henry Hugh Proctor; the Reverend R. D. Stinson; Dr. Heathe Slater (one of Moses Amos's partners in Gate City Drug Store); and grocery store owner Willis Murphy.[1]

At this meeting, attended by Mayor Woodward, Captain James English, and fire chief Walthall Joyner, the whites assured the black leaders that they would offer protection and some level of safety; and in return pleaded with the handpicked group of black elites to use their influence to urge black compliance with law-and-order measures being implemented. The restrictive and demeaning Jim Crow laws governing streetcars, restaurants, and other public settings were discussed, but in the end, the black leaders agreed to advocate compliance and accommodation in exchange for protection from the authorities.

Proctor and the other black ministers agreed that they would exhort their congregations to consider the value of circumspect behavior. In addition, the group agreed that certain white leaders would visit black churches to publicly pledge their support for the "good negroes" who obeyed the law-and-order requirements.

Despite the horrors of the past few days and the undeniable persecution of blacks by whites, the message conveyed at this private meeting—and repeated publicly in the pages of the newspapers—was that the burden of restoring order in Atlanta had been placed on its black residents. That whites demanded black compliance and acquiescence was clear. As a front-page story in the *Constitution* stated, it was in black residents' "power to stop trouble or bring on a war of extermination." The paper quoted Colonel Anderson saying, "If the negroes will stop their attacks, no attacks will be made on them. . . . It is to the interest of the negroes even more than to the interest of the whites to stop the present conflict at once. It is hoped they will see this and act accordingly."[2]

★★★

Later that morning, Proctor called a meeting of black ministers at First Church. He relayed the message from the mayor, police chief, and Captain English. He begged the ministers to agree to cooperate with requests from authorities.

The ministers drafted a resolution, which was sent to the white daily newspapers. The resolution asked blacks not to resist arrest, and stated:

> We sincerely hope there is no colored person so simple and foolish as to think of resisting an officer or soldier who are striving so earnestly to have peace and order fully restored.
>
> Let us do all we can to assist them.
>
> (Signed)
>
> THE COLORED MINISTERS OF ATLANTA[3]

★★★

On September 27, Henry DeGive, manager of Atlanta's downtown Grand theater, sent a telegram to the New York touring company that was scheduled to come to Atlanta for a return engagement of *The Clansman*, the melodramatic tale of vengeance and the Klan. DeGive told newspaper reporters that he made the move of his own volition, not because of urging by Captain English or the police.

"Everyone who has seen *The Clansman* agrees that its appearance here could result in no good and would possibly be the cause of additional disasters," noted a reporter for the *Journal,* which a year before had serialized the novel on which the play was based.[4]

★★★

For many white civic and commercial leaders, the more immediate crisis at hand was not protecting blacks from being attacked, but keeping Atlanta's

image from being tarnished. The riot had made front-page news across the country, and city boosters feared that Atlanta's progressive, New South image had been shattered. With stores closed, assembly lines stalled, citizens locked in their own homes in fear, most schools still empty, and businesses hemorrhaging money, Atlanta was in chaos.

The *Constitution*'s Clark Howell—whose father Evan Howell and predecessor Henry Grady had been instrumental in crafting that New South image—devoted enormous space in his newspaper to reporting on national views of the riots, and editorials promoting Atlanta's get-back-to-business spirit. Howell fixated on how other cities judged Atlanta. He reprinted excerpts from editorials in southern papers such as the *Chattanooga Times* that supported white Atlanta's actions: "The only wonder is that the people of the Georgia capital were able to restrain for so long a time their anger." He ran commentary critical of the other papers' sensationalism: "Atlanta is in greater danger from the brutal license of yellow journalism than the lust of the negro," (*New York Sun*). He also ran editorials that criticized Atlanta, such as this from the *Chicago Tribune*: "It is most unfortunate that this should happen in Atlanta, which has been considered one of the most enlightened and advanced cities of the South."[5] The *Constitution* editors then drew from the most sympathetic comments to argue that white Atlanta had widespread support. They noted:

> Our brethren to the North, East and West are learning us [sic] with a greater thoroughness. They are learning that the problem is not sectional but national. To the exceptions . . . we would speak this word of gentle reminder: Atlanta is not the ONLY city, and the South not the ONLY section visited, RECENTLY, with the lawless and anti-racial mob. . . . We are keenly alive to the deplorability of the thing. But we insist that the city is not without EXALTED COMPANY in every section of the country.[6]

Howell correctly assumed that observers in other parts of the country would look to what had happened in Atlanta as a harbinger of violence throughout the South. By holding up Atlanta as the epitome of progress, Howell and his fellow civic boosters also put the city in the unenviable

role of being a symbol for the entire region. "I say that the South is at this moment sitting on a powder magazine," noted correspondent Homer Bassford in a *New York Times* article headlined "South Fears Explosion" and ominously declaring "fifty towns in Atlanta's mood."[7]

In the city's other newspaper offices, editors worried less about appeasing the world than about assuaging subscribers and single-copy buyers. Knowing that they were under fire for the sensational extras published the night of the riot's outbreak, and under order from the Fulton grand jury to cease publishing extra editions, the afternoon dailies mounted public relations battles. No one was more frantic, or in more need of damage control, than Charles Daniel of the *News.* In an attempt to portray himself in the best light, Daniel continually shifted blame for the violence to the actions of alleged criminal blacks, hoping his own involvement as an instigator of violence and advocate of lynch-mob justice would be overlooked.

Unrepentantly continuing to equate sexual and racial politics, Daniel characteristically took the low road when defending Atlanta against northern critics. "Rest assured that the sympathies of the north and west are entirely with the south. Narrow and bigoted utterances are being made, but they do not voice the sentiments of anything but a negligible minority," he wrote on September 29. "A few eccentric maidens in the sere and yellow of New England autumn may be enamored of the darkey. But remember, in charity, that had their affections been sought . . . these damsels long ago would have been tending babies instead of other people's business."[8]

★★★

While Tuesday morning's negotiations had been exclusive, the chamber of commerce issued an open invitation to all of Atlanta's "better citizens" to attend a meeting at three that afternoon.

Business leaders eagerly attended. With the story of the Brownsville raid circulating through the city and Atlantans still staying at home, commerce had come to a halt. "A bad old day for Atlanta," Walter Foote wrote in his diary. "Rumors began to fly early and everything was shut down by twelve."

The Fulton County superior court house was packed and overflowing as more than a thousand men crowded into the main room, "the biggest kind of meeting," Foote described it. Virtually all of the attendees were white, but a small contingent was black—among them Dr. William Penn, Max Barber, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Benjamin Davis. [9]

It is a telling testament to Atlanta's "business first" attitude that the meeting was called by and presided over not by the mayor or police chief or city council, but by Sam Jones, president of the chamber of commerce, who declared that the busyness that comes with business would be the best tool to quell violence. "Keep white and colored hard at work, and they'll have no time to stand around the street corners," he urged attendees in his opening comments.[10]

The group immediately decided that a resolution condemning the mob violence and the slow police response should be drafted, and appointed Clark Howell and a small committee to the task. They left the room to begin writing. As the floor opened for more discussion, the room grew noisy as men called out their suggestions. "Close all negro businesses!" "Disarm the blacks!" "Increase the segregation on streetcars and businesses so white women won't come into contact with black men!"

The room fell silent when a tall, black man in the back stood up to speak. It was Dr. Penn, whose home had been ransacked just that morning, whose neighborhood had been under fire, and who had spent three nights patrolling his block to safeguard his family and community.

Only a few hours before, Penn told the hushed gathering, he had been roughed up by the militia and forced to escape from his own home. He looked out over the hundreds of white men assembled in the courthouse and asked, "What am I to do if I cannot protect myself and my family?" [11]

A gruff Civil War colonel, A. J. McBride, stood up, and said that he knew Penn and lived near him. "I am willing to shoulder a musket to protect he and his family from the mob," he said, and then adding paternalistically, "I remember when we went to the war in the '60s, the negroes on our plantations took care of wives and children and protected them. Now it is our time to protect them."

A chorus of whites spoke up and pledged to protect and support "better" blacks like Penn. For the Yale-educated doctor, the patronizing promises and platitudes must have been infuriating. In a coup de grace, Charles Hopkins, member of the *News* board but also the attorney for Atlanta University—said of black Atlanta, "If we allow this helpless and dependent race to be slaughtered before our eyes, we cannot face God!"[12]

After debating prohibition, police enforcement, a feared mass exodus of the "better negroes," and other subjects, the group agreed to turn over law-and-order to a "Committee of Ten," comprised of white business and civic leaders, to be headed by Captain James English, with members including Sam Jones, A. B. Steele, Luther Rosser, and Charles Hopkins.

A collection was taken up for families of riot victims, and $3,782 was raised on the spot. Charles Hopkins, Randolph Rose, George Muse, the *Journal* and *Constitution,* Ernest Woodruff, and the Atlanta Ice and Coal Company gave $100; Walter Foote and George Hillyer each gave $50. (Charles Daniel, notably, did not contribute).

George Muse, the department store owner, and Walter Cooper, the newspaper man turned chamber of commerce secretary, were elected to write the official report on the riot and determine the best way to disburse the funds.

At the end of the meeting, the group, many of them the same men who at the start of the month had signed a petition decrying vigilante justice, signed the resolution denouncing the violence and taking aim at the authorities that had not stopped the outbreak sooner:

"Where government has not been able to protect life, the common instincts of humanity demand that it at least care for the victims of violence in sickness and death."

★★★

That evening, from New York City, Booker T. Washington made a statement picked up by newspapers including the *Constitution.* He asked that his keynote speech at the National Negro Business League be remembered.

He pointed out that back then, in late August, he had spoken out against blacks who committed assaults and that he had spoken out against white lynchers. "I feel the present situation too deeply to give an extended utterance," the Wizard of Tuskegee said. "I would strongly urge that the best white people and the best colored people come together in council and use their united efforts to stop the present disorder."

Washington added, "The Atlanta outbreak should not discourage our people but should teach a lesson from which all can profit."[13]

★★★

More than one thousand blacks left Atlanta in the days immediately following the riot, and both black and white leaders feared more would join the exodus, thereby slowing the region's economy and shattering its progressive image. The *Constitution* lamented, "Thousands of negroes, the best class of the race, the law-abiding class, collecting their property and their savings and leaving Atlanta! Business in almost total stagnation." The *Independent* echoed with, "Let the colored people stop talking about leaving the city. This is our home and our white neighbors want us to stay here and prosper. Why not settle down to business?"[14]

Less than a week after the riot started, Alonzo and Adrienne Herndon put their son, Norris, on the train to attend school in Philadelphia. A few months later, in response to a request from Booker T. Washington that she take part in a magazine article featuring prominent black, southern women, Adrienne declined, adding that she might not even be staying in Atlanta. "Some times I doubt if there is any spot in this country where one with Negro blood can plant a home free from prejudice, scorn, and molestation," she wrote.[15]

18

What Happened to Max Barber

> "There has been no 'carnival of rapes' in and around Atlanta. There has been a frightful carnival of newspaper lies."
> —J. MAX BARBER, in unsigned letter to the *New York World,* September 27, 1906, quoted in *The Voice*, November 1906

Sitting in the public meetings and listening as black leaders hammered out the terms of an alliance with whites and negotiated the uneasy terms of a truce that traded protection for accommodation, Max Barber was seething, infuriated by the blithe manner in which whites continued to place blame for the deadly events on blacks.

As he listened to an unending chorus of accusation against a class of blacks universally labeled as "criminal," Barber, the young coeditor of *Voice of the Negro,* was driven to take action. His fury had been ignited a few days earlier when, the day after the violence broke out, the *New York World* ran a letter from *Georgian* editor John Temple Graves claiming that a "carnival of rapes" by black men caused the riot.

Barber called the *World* office begging for a chance to issue a rebuttal. The editors agreed that under the byline, "a Colored Citizen," he would be able to refute Graves's statements. He sent a telegram to the *World* on September 26.

Barber's *World* editorial, published on Thursday, September 27, caused an uproar in Atlanta. First he defended Atlanta's blacks against the blame for the riot. Then he went on to accuse the daily papers of inciting violence.

Following that, he leveled charges that went even higher and extended more broadly, condemning elite whites for what had happened in Atlanta, and taking aim at all four editors of the daily papers.

> Remember that Charles Daniel, editor of the *News*, had for more than a month sought by every hellish device to precipitate a race war. He had called for the reorganization of the Ku Klux Klan. . . . Remember that Mr. Graves himself had written repeatedly in limpid and classic style about the "The Shadow of the Black Terror." Remember that the *Atlanta Journal* had exhausted its vocabulary abusing the Negro while the *Constitution* was mum.

Finally, in his most audacious claim, Barber said that some of the alleged assaults were staged by Hoke Smith's supporters. He suggested that white men had dressed in blackface and staged the incidents—both mere startling of women like Mittie Waites and serious physical assaults like the attack on Ethel Lawrence—so that the resulting news coverage could be twisted in order to further the candidate's political chances. Barber wrote:

> First, Hoke Smith . . . transformed himself into a human moccasin and for eighteen long months he abused the Negro to the snarling riff-raff of this state. . . . Some of his emissaries blacked their faces, knocked down a few white women, and fled. Smith was elected overwhelmingly.

Barber concluded: "The cause of the riot: Sensational newspapers and unscrupulous politicians."[1]

★★★

The day after *The World* printed his letter, Barber got a call from Captain English, now named head of the Committee of Ten and given power to control law enforcement in Atlanta. English ordered Barber to meet him in his offices.[2]

You have been accused of sending a letter to the *World*, and suggesting that white man darkened their faces and assaulted white women, Captain English said.

Who accused me? Barber asked.

It doesn't matter, barked English harshly. The telegram you sent to the *World* was traced to your office. It's up to you to prove that you aren't its author.

If I didn't write it, asked Barber, What can I do to prove that I'm innocent?

You can go to the Grand Jury right now and clear your name and send letters to the Atlanta newspapers—*and* to the *World*—denying the letter.

And what if I did write it?

You would have slandered Atlanta, you would have slandered a number of men including the governor-elect, said English. If you wrote that letter, you will be sentenced to serve on a chain gang or run out of town. Go straighten this out.

Barber headed back to the *Voice of the Negro* offices on Auburn Avenue. Knowing that the telegram had been traced to him, he knew that English—and thus every member of the police commission and anyone sitting in a grand jury hearing—would know it, too. Even if he lied and denied sending the editorial, he would be marked by white business and political leaders.

"If I had been told a mob was about to visit me, I should have remained at my post and died like a man," Barber later wrote. "But I knew Atlanta had killed all the people she cared to stand for at this time. . . . I did not care to be made a slave on a Georgia chain gang."[3]

He left Atlanta that night.

The next day English summoned *Voice of the Negro* circulation director James Woodlee, and he also was told to leave town. Reporters and detectives swarmed the offices making sure that Barber and Woodlee had left the city.

★★★

Barber left Atlanta on Friday night and slipped back into town over the weekend to check his offices. He found his workplace guarded by police,

and was questioned roughly by officers. That weekend, Barber left Atlanta for good.

His magazine left Atlanta, too, and from Chicago, it re-emerged as the *Voice* a few months later. Without W. E. Bowen as his coeditor and the support of the Atlanta colleges and universities, Barber produced the magazine almost single-handedly.

In an article titled "Why Mr. Barber Left Atlanta," he described his *World* telegram and his run-in with Captain English. Barber defended his claims that some of the alleged "assaults" were the work of white men in disguise. Barber claimed that a white man told him that when the posse hunted for the attacker of Ethel and Mabel Lawrence, bloodhounds led them to the home of a white man three separate times.

In his first issue from Chicago, Barber wrote a lengthy account of the riot headlined "The Atlanta Tragedy." In this piece he named Charles Daniel of the *News* as the man who "deliberately fomented and precipitated the riot" and said that although the violence was "launched by the rabble, the creative force of this mob was the upper class." He claimed that Daniel was part of a plan to start the riot, citing as evidence an editorial that appeared in the *News* on September 23, the day after the violence broke out. As a newspaperman himself, Barber claimed that this editorial must have been written during the day on Saturday, September 22, or at least that evening, before the riot started, in order to make the print deadline. In the editorial, Daniel wrote, "There is no need to deceive ourselves about the situation. A conflict, terrible in its consequences, is surely coming." Barber claimed that this editorial predicted violence would start. He also cited conversations with his fellow black Atlantans, some of whom said they had been sent home early that Saturday by white employers who warned of coming violence. On the afternoon of September 22, "a white man who drives a laundry wagon told his Negro assistant that the white people of Atlanta planned to 'clean up the Niggers' after night."[4]

Barber decried the accommodationist leanings of black Atlanta leaders such as minister Proctor and *Independent* editor Benjamin Davis. And he blamed Booker T. Washington for delivering a speech at the opening of

the August National Business League meeting that inflamed white prejudices and, immediately following the riot, continuing to take a conciliatory stance. Responding to queries from Samuel Laing Williams, a Chicago lawyer and civil rights proponent, Washington's secretary Emmett Jay Scott wrote on October 19, 1906, "My candid opinion is that there was no reason whatever for Barbour [sic] to get scared and leave Atlanta as he did. Bowen, Crogman and others were persecuted, but they stood their ground. It would seem that a man who claimed to partake of the spirit of John Brown would face the enemy instead of flying at the first rumor of danger."[5]

Certainly, some of Davis's editorials immediately following the riot and community meetings were acquiescent. He, like many black leaders, quickly distanced himself from the black underclass, and he encouraged blacks to separate the "better class" of whites from those who had killed in the riot.

In an essay contributed to the *Georgian* and reprinted in the *Independent,* Davis wrote:

> We must rise above the mob and not charge our friends with the sins and mob violence of the vicious and irresponsible. We can even do better than our white friends. . . . Our white neighbors charge the entire race with the sins of the vicious; this is manifestly unfair and it will not be fair to charge Atlanta as an entity with mob violence. . . . We were in a position Saturday night to see much of the mob, and it was not composed of the people who made and make Atlanta.[6]

But Davis also resisted other black leaders' rush to blame the "lower element" unquestioningly, and urged his fellow black community leaders to continue to condemn the violence. "All the rapes committed in our community have never done the community half so much hurt as the mob."[7]

★★★

Driven out of Atlanta, and working from Chicago, Barber maintained that the interracial cooperation between Captain English, Charles Hopkins,

Pastor Proctor, Alonzo Herndon and the rest was a veneer. He called the white community's reaction to the riots a "weak spasm of patronizing virtue which results in scandalous leniency." Atlanta, he predicted, would "relapse" into the same prejudices that had existed before. He cautioned:

> Again we have a city that struts before the world as the liberal gateway of a great section, but is really the same old Atlanta steeped in the foul odors of ante-bellum traditions and held firmly in the remorseless clutch of a vile and unreasonable race prejudice. The white man's attitude toward the negro still has in it a mixture of a fine conceit of superiority.[8]

19

On Trial

> "This is probably the first time in the history of the South that a Negro who had been positively identified by the woman who it was said he outraged has been allowed to escape lynching or sentence by the court."
> —HENRY HUGH PROCTOR, quoted in *Independent*, December 15, 1906

In October, two men associated with the riot went to trial.

Alex Walker, a black man accused of shooting Officer Heard in Brownsville, was sentenced to life in prison, based on circumstantial evidence—largely the testimony of a white officer who claimed to have spotted him among a crowd of more than fifty the night the shooting took place.

George Blackstock, who had been seen by a number of reliable witnesses attacking Mattie Adams and her family in their restaurant, and who had set out to Atlanta from Oakland with the stated intention of hurting blacks, was fined four hundred dollars and dismissed.

"Shame on justice," wrote Davis in the *Independent*. "Is this any way to restore confidence to the negro and make him believe he will be protected?"[1]

But a month later, a trial would take place in Atlanta that would astound Davis, Proctor, Atlanta's white business and civic leaders—and

the rest of the country, which had been watching the city for signs of renewed racial violence.

★★★

On November 13, two white men, E. A. Pinion and W. A. McGragor, were walking near the Cascade Avenue residence of J. N. Camp and his wife, Aletha. They were surprised when a black man came racing out of the house, followed by Mrs. Camp—who had her hands clasped around her own throat, and, shortly after leaving the house, fell to the street. The black man, who was carrying a gun, ran away. Pinion and McGragor did not get a good look at him.[2]

Pinion ran over and saw that a thick leather strap was cinched about Aletha Camp's throat. He took McGragor's pocketknife and sliced through the strap, allowing the now-desperate woman to breathe easily. Mrs. Camp told them that she had been attacked by a black man who broke into her home, choked her with the strap so she could not cry out for help, and threatened to kill her with his gun. Then, said Mrs. Camp, the man raped her and fled from the house.

McGragor and Pinion escorted the woman home and called police. Pinion looked around the house and saw one of the man's footprints, which seemed to be from a worn, pointed-toed shoe.

Within hours, police had arrested a suspect, Joe Glenn, a black man whose West End farm was about three miles from the Camps' home. Mrs. Camp identified Glenn as the attacker and he was locked in the Tower.

The next day, Charles Hopkins went to Len Roan, the judge assigned to the case, and suggested that Glenn be given a trial by jury. Such a gesture—unheard of in rape cases with black defendants—would go a long way toward appeasing Atlanta's black community, and would improve Atlanta's image with the rest of the country, said Hopkins.

Fine, said Judge Roan. You're assigned to the defense.

Hopkins, Luther Rosser, an attorney who also served as president of the board of education, and John McLelland were assigned to defend Glenn.

On November 15, a distraught Mrs. Camp traveled to a grand jury hearing to identify the suspect. She was so frazzled that she had to be carried by chair from the buggy at the curb to her seat in the courtroom, which was packed with spectators and Glenn's friends, family, and neighbors.

Mrs. Camp identified Joe Glenn as the attacker and said she recognized a gun that had been found in his home. Judge Roan indicted Glenn, and the trial was set for the next day.

★★★

When the trial started on the morning of November 16, the jurors were all white men—Mike Shuman, T. W. Johnson, J. E. Colber, A. H. Esterly, A. B. Steele, G. H. Tanner, E. C. Atkins, W. C. Healey, Gordon Kiser, C. G. Malone, and B. Davidson.

Joe Glenn was sitting at the defendant's table with attorney John McLelland.

Mrs. Camp was the first witness. She told her story and described the attacker as a dark-skinned black man with very white eyes, of medium height and build, wearing a dark slouch hat.

Rosser pointed at Glenn and asked if she recognized him.

"No, that's not the negro," said Mrs. Camp.

Then Glenn was asked to step up toward Mrs. Camp and she realized that he was the man on trial.

"You are the one—you, you, low down rascal. Oh I'd like to kill you. Yes, put on that old hat. You, you, you. . ."[3]

Mrs. Camp broke down into uncontrollable sobs.

Attorney Rosser stepped forward.

"Judge Roan," he said. "You need to declare a mistrial or strike Mrs. Camp's statement from the record."

Then he turned to the still sobbing woman. "By this tirade you practically act this man's life away," he said to Mrs. Camp.[4]

The judge ordered the trial to go on.

Mrs. Camp identified Joe Glenn's hat as the one worn by her attacker.

Police officer Dunbar testified that he had been riding near Glenn's farm when he noticed that a little boy in the field, spotting the mounted officer, raced into a barn. Suspicious, Dunbar followed him, and found Glenn in the hayloft. Assuming that Glenn, warned by the boy, had been deliberately hiding, Dunbar decided to bring him in.

Pinion, who had examined the footprint found near Mrs. Camp's house the day of the incident, said that the pointed-toe imprint did not seem to match Glenn's big, rounded brogans. McGragor said the same. Neither of them remembered what the man they had seen running from the Camp house was wearing.

The defense called Glenn's daughter and young sons as witnesses. They said they had spent all day with their father working the farm, picking peanuts and moving hay. More than twenty-five character witnesses—black and white—testified for Glenn.

At midday, a surprise message came in for Judge Roan. Another man had been arrested who met Mrs. Camp's physical description more closely than Glenn had.

Roan continued the trial, waiting the arrival of the new suspect. After a while, Officer Buntyn brought in the newly arrested man, Will Johnson. Johnson, Buntyn said, had been walking the streets of West End with a double-barreled shotgun and, when brought into custody, was found to have women's clothing tied around his body, on top of which he wore two suits. He also wore a slouch hat almost identical to Glenn's.

Rosser spoke to the jury, urging them to consider the new evidence and Mrs. Camp's inconsistent identification of Glenn. The jurors retreated for only four-and-a-half minutes and returned with their verdict.

Joe Glenn was acquitted of all charges.

★★★

Leaving the courtroom, Hopkins and the other attorneys encountered a group of black leaders, including Henry Hugh Proctor. They thanked the

lawyers for their work. They asked that, if Johnson were also tried by jury, a black man be appointed to the group, to show that black Atlantans took the crime of rape, and the need for trial by jury, as seriously as whites did.

Even though a jury had declared him innocent, Joe Glenn did not go home to his farm in West End that night. The judge and his attorneys advised him to spend that night in jail, worried that if he returned home it would be to face a lynch mob unhappy with the trial's outcome.

The next morning, Hopkins, Rosser, and McLelland met with Glenn and advised him to leave town—for his own safety. They gave him a train ticket, a change of clothes, and a letter of introduction to a farmer in Columbia, Alabama. They took him to the station and saw him safely on the train.

Joe Glenn never arrived in Columbia. The farmer never heard from him. No one remembered seeing him leave the train. No one saw him back at his home in Atlanta's West End, either.

Speaking with reporters, Charles Hopkins said that it was possible Glenn might have returned to Atlanta, knowing that Will Johnson was under arrest, and might be living under a false name. Hopkins refused to speculate further, saying only, "Glenn was innocent. Of that there is no question."[5]

★★★

Throughout October and November, black leaders had cooperated with requests from whites that they use their influence to encourage lower- and working-class blacks to comply with Captain English and the Committee of Ten's strict law-and-order demands. The black elites' request—for loosened Jim Crow restrictions on public accommodations—had been ignored.

Indeed, under English and the committee, Jim Crow rules had grown more stringent. While blacks had pleaded for less hassling on the streetcars, they now were forced into designated back-of-the-car seats—fully

segregated streetcars were on order. Elevators in public buildings were racially separated (blacks had to ride the freight elevators).

Tensions remained so high that E. J. Barco, city editor of the *Independent*, wrote an editorial proposing that elevators in Atlanta's skyscrapers be clearly segregated. While white passengers had their own elevators, often if the elevators were slow, whites would hop in the freight elevators to save time. "Suppose, accidentally, some colored man should stumble and fall against some white lady while getting on or off?" he asked. "What would be the outcome? No one can tell, so the easier way is the best. Compel the white people to ride in the cars designated for them."[6]

Every black employee of Western Union left his position, frightened by the murder of Frank Smith on the Forsyth Street viaduct.

Black businesses that had been vandalized stayed closed, or their owners relocated to Auburn Avenue, making black businesses more isolated and more segregated and reducing the number of integrated districts like Decatur Street and Piedmont Avenue.

After weeks of prohibition, white saloons reopened on October 1. Black bars and clubs remained shuttered, with their customers forced to buy alcohol from wholesalers.

The day after prohibition was lifted, Recorder Broyles's courtroom was filled with drunks brought in by police. According to the *Constitution,* "Jedge Briles" saw forty-five cases, twenty of them for public intoxication. Both W. S. McCloud, white, and Dave Bailus, black, were arrested for drunkenly roaming downtown in the wee hours, and each was fined $15.75. "That's my price for this late night wandering," quipped Broyles. "You fellows have got to stay home at night."[7]

On October 30, an edict was issued banning any saloon from serving both white and black customers; all establishments serving alcohol had to be "white only" or "black only." Renewal of licenses was arbitrary. Charles Moseley, who on the morning of September 22 had been given a small fine, was now hit with a one-thousand-dollar penalty. As the holiday season approached, he was in jail, working off the fee that he was unable to pay.[8]

★★★

On December 7, Mrs. Carrie Comstock, a white door-to-door saleswoman for Plantine cooking "compound," knocked on the door of 128 Jones Avenue. It was opened by Robert Turnadge, a white plumber. When Mrs. Comstock asked if she could speak to the lady of the house, Turnadge invited her in; as soon as she was inside, he attacked her violently and tried to rape her. Mrs. Comstock fought back, biting into Turnadge's finger as he pressed his hands across her face suppressing her screams. Turnadge punched her face, breaking her nose.

Turnadge was arrested and put on trial December 18. His own sister, Madge, testified that her brother was prone to violence and irrational behavior. His father stated that, as a boy, Robert was eccentric, prowled the neighborhood alone, and slept in the woodshed by choice. Turnadge himself claimed that he was so drunk at the time of the attack he didn't remember anything.[9]

Judge Roan sentenced Turnadge to fifteen years of hard labor, saying, "Yours is one of the most brutal crimes I have known of. I cannot strongly enough characterize your cowardly and brutal attack upon this good woman."

Judge Roan said that he would have given Turnadge the full twenty years maximum sentence but that he had had to follow the recommendation of the all-white jury, which found Turnadge guilty but whose verdict included a "recommendation of mercy."[10]

20

Christmas Unease

> "All this sorrow has come to people who are absolutely innocent of any wrongdoing."
> —WALTER COOPER and GEORGE MUSE, Official Report on the Riot, December 9, 1906, from *Official History*

The official report on the riot was completed on Sunday, December 9. Its release was accompanied by a carefully orchestrated biracial public relations campaign staged from the pulpits of Atlanta's influential churches and devised in the boardrooms of its leading businesses.[1]

Over the Thanksgiving holiday, Charles Hopkins had organized a group called the Atlanta Civic League. With the help of a small committee that included Walter Foote, Luther Rosser, George Muse, A. B. Steele, and Robert Maddox, Hopkins invited fifteen hundred of the "best citizens" to join an organization designed to improve race relations, safety, and law enforcement in the city. Eventually, more than two thousand white men joined the league. Henry Hugh Proctor and other leading black ministers and businessmen formed the parallel Colored Cooperative Civic League, which enrolled more than fifteen hundred members. Delegations from each league gathered for cooperative interracial meetings, and these efforts resulted in the public show of unity on December 9.

Booker T. Washington came to Atlanta for that Sunday's events and spoke at Reverend Proctor's church that evening, delivering a speech that,

as so often, he had supplied in advance to the press. "What is being done by the Civic League and other organizations that have grown out of the Atlanta riot will not only serve a high purpose in the city of Atlanta and the state of Georgia, but I believe the movement will spread throughout the south," he said.

Washington was quick to stress again his philosophy that whites and blacks could work together on business and civic matters but remain socially separate. "I am in constant touch with all classes of my people, north and south, and I do not hesitate to say that the negro has no ambition to mingle socially with the white race, neither has he any ambition to dominate the white man in political matters."[2]

Washington indeed communicated constantly with his Atlanta supporters including Proctor, who on December 4 had traveled to the Tuskegee Institute to give a lecture about the Atlanta riot and the two civic leagues' efforts. Proctor vividly described scenes of mayhem, including blacks being dragged from trolley cars in front of First Church and stores on Auburn Avenue and Houston Street being ransacked. (Although Proctor had been out of town at a conference in Memphis when the violence broke out, his young children had been in Atlanta and had stared wide-eyed through the windows of the parsonage as white men and boys ran along Courtland Street looking for blacks to hurt and kill.) Proctor then went on to describe in even more detail the cooperation between the "better" classes of whites and blacks. Proctor told the Tuskegee audience that the riot served as a catalyst for cooperation between the races in Atlanta that he thought would be a model for the South.[3]

Washington and Proctor faced some criticism from northern black newspaper editors who wondered if their words—Washington's condemnation of "loafers" at the Business League meeting in August and Proctor's antidive sermon in September—had fueled white rage before the riot. The two men, laboring in the efforts to promote peace after the violence, were also preserving their own reputations.

W. E. B. Du Bois had been one of the black leaders invited to participate

in the cooperative meetings. While he attended some of them, he was not actively involved, soon returning to his sociology fieldwork in Alabama.[4]

★★★

On the Sunday that the riot report was published, former Georgia governor William J. Northen announced that he was forming a "gospel union," taking a message of interracial cooperation across Georgia, appealing to the "better class" of whites and blacks to form Christ-focused alliances designed to stamp out lawlessness among the lowest, or "third class," of people and to promote protection of women of both races. Northen, whose bushy white beard and piercing eyes gave him the look of an Old Testament prophet, presented paradoxical views on race and progress. A plantation-raised rural Georgian who openly yearned for antebellum days, he also was known as an ardent antilynching advocate. Although he called for interracial cooperation, his version was less progressive than the civic leagues'. Northen worried that a "second class" of whites — newspaper editors, politicians, and some preachers — had fueled the violence if not directly participating in it — and that a "second class" of blacks had advocated retaliation and resistance to the violence. Northen wanted the "best class" of both races in his union — but only the best whites to run it.

"Let it be understood all the way through that in the South there can never be any social intermingling of the races, and that the political power of this section will remain in present hands, but the negroes will be guaranteed equal protection of the law," wrote Northen in the document outlining his Gospel Union proposal.

"There should be no aristocracy of crime," stated Northen. "A white fiend is as much to be dreaded as a black brute."[5]

★★★

The full text of official findings was supplied to the papers.

The actual report was brief. Its authors, George Muse and Walter Cooper,

concerned themselves largely with the disbursement of the $4,423 eventually collected in donations for the families of the killed and injured. The amounts distributed ranged from $50 to $400.

Muse and Cooper reported a death toll of twelve—ten black and two white—stating that they believed that other reports exaggerated the body count. With the motive of receiving funds from the committee and having funeral expenses covered, why, they rather disingenuously posited, would anyone, white or black, *not* come forward to report a death and make a claim. They reported seventy injured persons.

This count was significantly lower than that published by initial newspaper reports, which put the number of black deaths on the first night alone at twenty-five. Max Barber's account of the riot in the *Voice* claimed that at least a dozen white men had been killed. Bodies of dead blacks had been removed from downtown Atlanta in the early hours of Sunday, September 23, by families fearful the corpses would be burned in the streets.

Muse and Cooper underscored the effect of the riot on Atlanta's reputation, the harm done by "unspeakable brutality," and its lingering effect on the city's residents. In an eloquent line, they noted, "There are in this glad Christmas time, widows of both races mourning for their husbands, and husbands of both races mourning for their wives; there are orphan children of both races who cry out for faces they will see no more; there are grown men of both races disabled for life." A careful reader of this section would note that, by the authors' reported death toll, there were *not* women of both races left widowed by the riot. According to Muse and Cooper only two whites died: one Mrs. Thompson, the woman who had a heart attack, the other officer Jim Heard, shot at Brownsville, who was according to the city directory or newspaper reports, single. Several black women were known to be widowed, among them Priscilla Fambro, whose husband, Frank, had been shot to death in the raid on Brownsville.

The Muse-Cooper report stressed that, "among the victims of the mob, there was not a single vagrant," and that the killed represented hard workers who supported their families, and although "of humble circumstances"

were "honest, industrious and law-abiding citizens and useful members of society."

The report also clearly blamed the incident on the "tougher element" of the city and exonerated the "better classes" of both races from any culpability.[6]

★★★

Atlanta leaders desperately wanted to have an uneventful Christmas, so they brought in extra police officers to reinforce patrols and closed bars and saloons early. Black ministers and community leaders were asked to keep blacks off the streets over the holiday, fearful that the "tougher element" of whites might be provoked to violence if they encountered black Atlantans out in public.

On Christmas Eve, two white police officers in Brownsville drunkenly threatened the widow Priscilla Fambro—whose husband had been killed in the raid on Brownsville three months earlier.[7]

Epilogue

Atlanta, 2006

On February 7, 2006, more than fifteen thousand mourners crowded into the massive sanctuary of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Lithonia, a suburb of Atlanta, to pay their respects to the recently deceased Coretta Scott King, the widow of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The memorial service, which went on for more than six hours and was nationally and internationally televised, was attended by president George W. Bush and ex-presidents George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Jimmy Carter. There were songs and tears and long speeches, as one after another, politicians, ministers, and civil rights movement veterans paid tribute to the woman who in 1968 graciously led a march for economic justice through the streets of Memphis just days after her husband was killed by an assassin's bullet.[1]

Among the many speakers who delivered eulogies—including former presidents, senators, the governor of Georgia, and King's friends and children—was Shirley Franklin, the mayor of Atlanta. Franklin, the first female mayor of Atlanta, and an African American, had just a month before been sworn in for her second term in office after winning 90 percent of the vote. She credited King's work with setting the stage for her own unprecedented political achievement. "She gathered us here today from all walks of life, and all persuasions, to lift our voices in songs of freedom, equality, social and economic justice," said Franklin.[2]

Observing that service, as white and black Atlantans in positions of great power sat side by side on the stage of a glittering, multimillion-dollar church in an affluent African American community outside of Atlanta, it seems remarkable that such social, political, and economic change could have taken place in the century since Atlanta was the site of the four days of horrific rage and violence in 1906.

Just how much did the lessons of the race riot inform Atlanta citizens' behavior in the hundred years that followed? And how does the riot continue to affect Atlanta, positively and negatively, to this day?

Atlanta's civic and commercial leaders — of both races — have remained consistently concerned with the city's image in the eyes of the rest of the country and world. City boosters would go on to insist that the aftermath of the 1906 riot led to the development of ongoing interracial cooperation that was the foundation for Atlanta's 1960s reputation as the "city too busy to hate."

Certainly the series of meetings that took place on September 25, 1906, and continued through the end of the year, and were attended by black and white clergymen, business leaders, and elected officials, established a precedent for a formal pattern of interracial cooperation that continues to this day. Five decades later, Atlanta's whites who recalled, either from personal memory or family stories, the shame that fell on the city after the riot were more careful than southerners in other cities to avoid violence and bloodshed during school integration and public accommodations changes in the 1950s and 1960s. Atlanta's white newspapers, chastened by their role in the 1906 violence, became somewhat more temperate in their coverage of racial issues than papers in other cities.

By gaining an audience with, and a measure of cooperation from, white leaders, black community leaders in Atlanta were able to take a more active role in negotiating matters relating to schools, utilities, streetcars, and other public accommodations. However, like cities across the South, Atlanta tightened its Jim Crow laws as the 1900s progressed. Historian David Fort Godshalk argues that the concessions that black leaders were able to obtain in the aftermath of the riot were due not so much to the

persuasive power of the black elite leaders, but to the reality of African American retaliation and self-defense during September 1906. By fighting back, Atlanta's African Americans demonstrated that they could not be dealt with lightly by the city's whites and did as much — or more — to prevent future violence as the national headlines, local prosecution, and city council's prohibition and antivagrancy and crime measures.[3]

While it could be argued that the positive impact of the interracial cooperation between city leaders in 1906 helped foster a cooperative spirit in the city (certainly city boosters, always cognizant of public relations, would support this assertion), it was perhaps the horrors of the events that galvanized the resolve of Atlantans who would later emerge as civil rights pioneers.

In 1907 African American leaders including college president John Hope, editor Benjamin Davis, pastor Henry Hugh Proctor, and entrepreneur Alonzo Herndon led efforts to halt Hoke Smith's black disenfranchisement and urged blacks to register to vote. Despite these efforts, Smith's amendment to the Georgia constitution was passed in 1908, and blacks saw their political power increasingly eroded.

Walter White, who as a thirteen-year-old saw a man beaten to death on Peachtree Street and sat, shotgun at the ready, prepared to defend his home, went on to cofound the Atlanta chapter of the NAACP in 1917; led a boycott in support of public education for black Atlantans in the 1920s; became an expert on lynching, using his pale skin as a tool to infiltrate hate groups; and in the 1930s became head of the national NAACP. White always said that his fight for justice was kindled during the Atlanta riot.

When the Atlanta chapter of the NAACP was formed in 1917, many members of its executive board were veterans of the riot, among them Dr. William Penn, professor George Towns, Hope, and Davis.

John Wesley Dobbs, the newlywed mail carrier who, throughout the riot, sat in the front room of his home on Auburn Avenue with his government-issued pistol cocked and ready to use, kept guns on hand the rest of his life, always ready to defend his home and family. He went on to lead a voter registration drive in Atlanta in the 1940s that is considered

the birth of the city's modern civil rights era. That his grandson, Maynard Jackson, became Atlanta's first African American mayor in 1973 is testament to Dobbs's resilience.[4]

W. E. B. Du Bois, who put aside his pacifist ideals to purchase a shotgun and patrol the campus of Atlanta University, was changed indelibly by the experience. The riot cemented Du Bois's antiaccommodationist (and thus, anti-Booker T. Washington) stance, arguably fueling his resolve to found the NAACP and assume a more militant approach in combating racism and discrimination.[5]

★★★

On September 21, 2005—one hundred years to the date that Alonzo Herndon founded the Atlanta Life Insurance Company, and ninety-nine years after the outbreak of the Atlanta race riot—a gala celebration was held in the ballroom of the Grand Hyatt Hotel in downtown Atlanta. Executives of the company, now known as Atlanta Life Financial Group, celebrated Alonzo Herndon's vision and the company's success. Attendees, most in black tie and cocktail gowns, sat enthralled as local television anchor Monica Kaufman narrated the history of Atlanta Life, including the riot's destruction of Herndon's barbershop in 1906.

Present and past black mayors of Atlanta were in attendance while white candidates for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination, Cathy Cox and Mark Taylor, actively politicked in pursuit of African American votes. For many of the guests, the disenfranchisement of the black vote by Hoke Smith and his political allies and the political powerlessness of black Atlantans a hundred years ago was a historical footnote, an element of the multimedia presentation and dance numbers that accompanied Kaufman's narration.

But a look around the room revealed that although Atlanta has made dramatic social and racial strides over the past century, the chasm between Atlanta's upper-class white and black residents remains almost as wide as

it was when W. E. B. Du Bois arrived in the city and remarked on their separation. The few white attendees at the Atlanta Life event were politicians, journalists, and chamber of commerce types.[6]

The pattern of racial separation is consistent in modern Atlanta; attend the Swan Ball at the Atlanta History Center and virtually all those present are white; attend the mayor's Masked Ball and the majority of the guests are black. The racial lines extend beyond gatherings of the movers and shakers; go to a Midtown nightclub on "techno night" and the dance floor is white; go on hip-hop night and it's black. Atlanta is one of the most segregated cities in the country, and that segregation extends not just to schools and neighborhoods, but also to social events, churches, and civic organizations. Modern Atlantans refer to this as the "eighty/twenty rule," meaning that most people, especially whites, prefer a group to be eighty percent formed of their own race, and leave when the numbers from other racial groups represent more than a fifth.[7]

The vehement hatred of the past may be gone—or at least hidden—but the alliances that exist have a measure of unease that is closer to the tensions of a century ago than Atlanta boosters care to admit.

★★★

It's easy—and probably smart—to be cynical. But a hundred years later, remarkable changes *have* taken place in Atlanta.

Five mornings a week, I drive down Decatur Street on my way to work. At the corner where Langford's White Midway skating rink once stood, where on the night of September 22, 1906, hundreds of black children, women, and men huddled, their lives in danger, now stands Georgia State University's new classroom buildings and an elaborate gym, where black and white students sweat side by side on treadmills.

After Decatur becomes Marietta Street, I pass the statue of Henry W. Grady, where the riot's most macabre moments were enacted. Today, the statue marks one of the busiest downtown intersections, and is in the

shadow of the *Journal-Constitution* building, where a black woman, Cynthia Tucker, has taken Grady's mantle as lead editorial writer and public face of the paper.

When I reach my office on Peachtree Street, I can look out over downtown, glimpsing just a few blocks away the site of the Piedmont Hotel, where angry whites vivisected a black man the night of Saturday, September 22, 1906. The marble of the Candler Building glistens in the sun. The new downtown shuttle buses, designed to look like Atlanta's old streetcars, drive by with bells clanging, and they carry passengers of all races through the city.

My homeward journey takes me along Courtland Street, past the First Congregational Church building that Henry Hugh Proctor built in 1908. At the corner where the church stands, built on the same spot where First Church held services in 1906, another street has been rechristened. Houston Street, where Walter White and his family grew up, has been named for a figure in the riot's events—John Wesley Dobbs.

What happened during those days in September 1906 marks a shameful chapter in white Atlanta's history, and a painful one for black Atlanta. Its impact is etched into the city's streets and into Atlantans' collective experience. For better or worse, it shaped the city as it is today.

Notes

INTRODUCTION. ATLANTA, 1906

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2. Ray Stannard Baker, *Following the Color Line: American Negro Citizenship in the Progressive Era*, Harper Torchbook Edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 4.

3. Du Bois, "Relations of the Negroes with the Whites," 326.

4. "All Honor to South Carolina!" *Atlanta Evening News*, August 17, 1906, 6. *Atlanta Evening News* hereafter cited as *News*.

5. Discussion of the riot being overlooked draws on Franklin M. Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs: A Chronicle of Its People and Events*, Vol. 2 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1954), 494–505; Atlanta History Center's "Atlanta History Timeline," as of September 26, 2008, http://www.atlhist.org/template.cfm?cid=210.

6. Charles Crowe, "Racial Massacre in Atlanta September 22, 1906," *Journal of Negro History*, April 1969, 151. Crowe's 1968 article on the riot is "Racial Violence

and Social Reform: Origins of the Atlanta Riot of 1906," *Journal of Negro History*, July 1968, 234–256.

7. 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission, http://www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/1898-wrrc/; Mike Baker, "1898 Clash Ruled a Coup," *Washington Post*, June 1, 2006, A3; Coalition to Remember the Atlanta Race Riot of 1906, http://www.1906atlantaraceriot.org.

8. Gregory Mixon, *The Atlanta Riot: Race, Class, and Violence in a New South City* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 117.

9. David Fort Godshalk, *Veiled Visions: The 1906 Atlanta Race Riot and the Reshaping of American Race Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 11.

10. Proctor, *Between Black and White*, 99.

CHAPTER ONE. A LYNCHING IN LAKEWOOD

1. The account of Frank Carmichael's lynching is based on the daily newspaper accounts and the item in *Voice of the Negro* listed below. Carmichael also was identified as "Floyd" by some of the daily papers; I have elected to use the name "Frank Carmichael" as it appeared in the *Voice*. "In Presence of Outraged Girl"; "Quick Vengeance is Wreaked on Brute who Assaulted Young Girl, *Atlanta Journal*, August 1, 1906, 1; "The Murder of Frank Carmichael," *Voice of the Negro*, September 1906, 625.

2. "In Presence of Outraged Girl."

3. "Quick Vengeance."

CHAPTER TWO. POLITICS OF FEAR

1. Newspaper reports also referred to Hose as Sam Holt or Samuel Wilkes. The account of the Hose/Holt lynching draws from: "Assassination Near Palmetto; Mr. Cranford Brained with Axe," *Constitution*, April 13, 1899, 3; "Sam Holt, Murderer and Assailant, Burned at the Stake at Newnan," *Constitution*, April 24, 1899, 1; "Crowds Leave for Lynching," *Constitution*, April 24, 1899, 2; Ida B. Wells-Barnett, "Lynch Law in Georgia," 1899 pamphlet; Capeci and Knight, "Reckoning with Violence"; and "Major W. W. Thomas Pleaded in Vain for Lige Strickland's Life," *Constitution*, April 25, 1899, 3.

2. Quoted in Capeci and Knight, "Reckoning with Violence," 732.

3. Information on Hoke Smith draws from John Chalmers Vinson, "Hoke Smith," in *Georgians in Profile*, ed. Horace Montgomery, 303–325 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958); James F. Cook, "Smith, Hoke," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, Vol. 2, ed. Kenneth Coleman and Charles Stephen Carr, 898–900 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983); Walter G. Cooper, *Official History of Fulton County* (Atlanta: History Commission, 1934), 844–846.

4. Barton Shaw notes that Watson became more racist as he aged, extending his prejudices beyond African Americans toward Catholics and Jews. In 1913, Watson's inflamed attacks on Leo Frank, the pencil factory employee accused of raping and murdering thirteen-year-old Mary Phagan, were a significant factor in enraging Georgians. Frank, who was lynched, was described by Watson as the "Jew pervert." ("Watson, Thomas Edward," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, Vol. 2, 1040–1043)

5. Rebecca Latimer Felton is best known today for her barrier-breaking appointment as the first female United States senator. She was named to fill Watson's seat after his death in 1922. She served in the post for less than two days.

6. Kim Magowan, "Coming between 'the Black beast' and the White Virgin: The Pressures of Liminality in Thomas Dixon," *Studies in American Fiction*, Spring 1999, 77–102.

7. "Social and Political Equality," *Journal*, August 1, 1906, 8.

8. "The Ring and the Negro," *Journal*, August 2, 1906, 6.

9. Quoted in Crowe, "Racial Violence and Social Reform," 243.

CHAPTER THREE. THE GATE CITY

1. "J.W. English Jr. Elected," *Constitution*, August 9, 1906, 6.

2. Cooper, *Official History*, 852–853; John W. Patillo, "English, James Warren," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, Vol. 1, 292–293; Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs*, Vol. 2, 15, 36, 476–477.

3. Monroe Martin King, "Pemberton, John Stith," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, Vol. 2, 516; James Harvey Young, "Jacobs, Joseph," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, Vol. 1, 516–517; Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs*, Vol. 2, 75.

4. Atlanta's landmark predates the now better-known "Flat Iron" building in New York City by four years.

5. Clarence Weaver, *Atlanta: Up to Date Gate City of the South, Illustrated and Descriptive*, 4. Kenan Research Center archives, Atlanta History Center.

6. Moses Amos, "The First Negro Drug Store," *Atlanta Independent*, September 3, 1906, 3; Ray Stannard Baker, *Following the Color Line*, 42–43; Moses and Miles Amos Papers, Auburn Avenue Research Library, Atlanta; and Edward R. Carter, *The Black Side: A Partial History of the Business, Religious and Educational Side of the Negro in Atlanta, Ga.* Black Heritage Library Collection Edition (1894; reprint, Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 133–138. Citations are to the 1971 edition.

7. Weaver, *Atlanta: Up to Date Gate City*.

8. Carter, *The Black Side*, 227–230; and advertisements for Howell's business in *Atlanta Independent*, 1906.

9. Anne Hornsby, "Rucker, Henry A.," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, Vol. 2, 855–856.

10. Carole Merritt, *The Herndons: An Atlanta Family* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002), 32–44; Baker, *Following the Color Line*, 41–42; Alexa Henderson, "Herndon, Alonzo Franklin," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, Vol. 1, 441–442.

11. Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs*, Vol. 2, 25–27; Baker, *Following the Color Line*, 60–65.

12. The exact origin of the name Cabbagetown is unclear. Some historians call it a slur based on the residents' dietary staple. Others say it came from a single incident, in which a truckload of cabbages capsized in the neighborhood.

13. Cooper, *Official History*, 325–327; real estate ads, *News*, 1906.

14. "Ansley Park's Future as Seen By Mr. Ansley," *Constitution*, September 23, 1906, B4. Ultimately, Hurt would not be outdone by Ansley. He later developed Druid Hills, another Olmsted-landscaped neighborhood stretching on either side of Ponce de Leon Avenue, the tree-lined road leading from downtown Atlanta to Decatur, which is legendary for its mansions and graceful lawns and gardens.

15. Du Bois, "Relations of Negroes with the Whites," 326.

16. Du Bois, *Souls*, 114; Baker, *Following the Color Line*, 12–14; Robert Rhodes Crout, "Bowen, John Wesley Edward," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, Vol. 1, 100–102.

17. Advertisement for Nor'west in the *Constitution*. Multiple dates in 1906, including September 2, B3.

CHAPTER FOUR. THE TRUCK FARMER'S WIFE

1. *Atlanta Constitution*, August 16, 1906; Ray Stannard Baker, "The Atlanta Riot," *American*, reprinted by Phillips Publishing, 1907.

2. "A Reward of $1,000 to Guarantee Protection to the White Women of Fulton County," *News*, August 17, 1906, 6.

3. "The board of directors of the Atlanta News Pub. Co.," *News*, August 21, 1906, 1, 2.

4. "False Charges Laid to Graves," *Constitution*, February 7, 1906, 7.

5. John Patillo, "Graves, John Temple," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, Vol. 1, 364–365.

6. "All Honor to South Carolina!" *News*, August 17, 1906, 6.

CHAPTER FIVE. HARPERS FERRY

1. Description of the first Niagara Movement meeting and early plans for the second one are from Merritt, *The Herndons*, 72–77; Baker, *Following the Color Line*, 223–224; and the Harpers Ferry Centennial Commemoration, www.nps.gov/nafe/niagara.com.

2. Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (1901; reprint, New York: Penguin Group, 2000), 154. Citations are to the 2000 edition.

3. Telegram from W. E. B. Du Bois to Booker T. Washington, September 24, 1895, Booker T. Washington Papers, University of Illinois Press, http://www.historycooperative.org/btw/.

4. Du Bois, *Souls*, 87.

5. "The Niagara Movement," *Atlanta Independent*, August 4, 1906, 4.

6. Du Bois, *Souls*, 115.

7. Ibid., 44.

8. Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 7.

9. Ibid., 171.

10. Merritt, *The Herndons*, 72–77; Proctor, *Between Black and White*, 100–102.

11. Letter from W. E. Bowen to Booker T. Washington, November 12, 1895, Booker T. Washington Papers.

12. Du Bois, *Souls*, 112.

13. Moses Amos remained a strong supporter of Washington, but his son Miles

became very active in NAACP, which was cofounded by Du Bois. In the 1950s, Miles Amos contributed funds to a new civil rights project spearheaded by a minister named Martin Luther King Jr. King wrote to the pharmacist thanking him for a "very fine contribution." (Moses and Miles Amos Papers, Auburn Avenue Research Library)

14. Davis's place in history—as a journalist and activist—is overshadowed by that of his son, Benjamin Jefferson Davis Jr., who became a well-known communist and edited the *Negro Liberator* and the *Daily Worker*. Asa H. Gordon, *The Georgia Negro: A History*, Student Edition (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Brothers, 1937), 266, 389.

15. "The Niagara Movement."

16. Letter from Booker T. Washington to Henry Rucker, March 21, 1906, Booker T. Washington Papers.

17. Benjamin Davis, "Save Negro from Own Prejudice," *Independent*, June 30, 1906, 4.

18. "Negroes want equal rights," *New York Times*, August 20, 1906, 4.

CHAPTER SIX. INCIDENT AT COPENHILL

1. "Negro brutally attacks," *News*, August 20, 1906, 1.

2. "Niece of Injured Woman Was Also Hit by Negro," *Journal*, August 20, 1906, 1.

3. Ibid.

4. "Negro brutally attacks."

5. "News Bloodhounds," *News*, August 21, 1906, 6.

6. "A Reward of $1,123 to Guarantee Protection of the White Women of Fulton County," *News*, August 17, 1906, 6.

7. Joe Curtis, "Week with Posse Hunting a Negro," *News*, August 26, 1906, 2.

8. "Mob of 2,123 Gathered at the Lawrence Home Anxious to Burn Negro," *Constitution*, August 24, 1906, 1.

9. "Quiet is Restored in DeKalb County," *Constitution*, August 26, 1906, 4.

10. "Miss Mittie Waits Given Bad Fright By Negro at Spring," *News*, August 25, 1; "Another Girl Assaulted; Local Militia Guarding Decatur Jail," *Constitution*, August 26, 1906, 1.

11. "Quiet is Restored."

12. "'Ku Klux Klan' to protect women is now proposed," *News*, August 24, 1906, 1; "By All Means Organize the Ku Klux Klan," *News*, August 28, 1906, 6.

13. Walter Foote diary, Kenan Research Center archives, Atlanta History Center.

14. Letters to the editor from: D. L. Walden, *Journal*, August 25, 1906, 7; F. W. Beers, *News*, August 26, 1906, 4; O. White, *News*, August 26, 1906, 4.

15. "Atlanta women commend the News for demanding protection for womanhood," *News*, August 30, 1906, 8.

CHAPTER SEVEN. PASTOR PROCTOR'S SERMON

1. "Wants Loafers to Work," *Constitution*, August 28, 1906, 4.

2. Ibid.

3. Proctor, *Between Black and White*, 91–95.

4. For an excellent, in-depth summary of the development of the African-American church in Atlanta from before the Civil War until 1906, see Allison Dorsey's *To Build Our Lives Together: Community Formation in Black Atlanta 1875–1906* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004). As Dorsey notes, "church activities united Black Atlantans of diverse backgrounds by giving them social options in a city segregated first by custom, then by law. Black churches grew to be an integral part of efforts to provide for the sick and bury the dead, and to 'uplift the race.' Ultimately, the black churches of Atlanta reflect the transition from slavery to freedom; they simultaneously linked Black Atlantans to their past and were instrumental in the task of crafting the future." (81)

5. "Makes appeal for help," letter from Henry Hugh Proctor, *Constitution*, August 19, 1906, 7.

6. The description of Walter White's childhood draws from his autobiography, *A Man Called White*, 14–22; see also Alton Hornsby Jr. "White, Walter Francis," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, Vol. 2, 1058–1059.

7. Baker, *Following the Color Line*, 29–30.

8. Merritt, *The Herndons*, 41.

9. Ibid., 25–31; Alexa Henderson, "Herndon, Adrienne McNeill," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, Vol. 1, 439–440.

10. The limerick and name change are mentioned in Allison Dorsey's *To Build*

Our Lives Together, 79, and in Garrett's *Atlanta and Environs*, Vol. 2, 127. Changing a street's name as an attempt to upgrade its image is something Atlanta continues to do. In 1997, Stewart Avenue, notorious for strip clubs and prostitution, was renamed Metropolitan Parkway.

11. Atlanta city directories, 1900–1906.

12. Ibid. The directories contain a wealth of information, not only names and occupations of all residents but also cab rates, salaries of government employees, and more.

13. Baker, *Following the Color Line*, 32–33.

14. James Brawley, "Crogman, William Henry," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, Vol. 1, 235–236; Sharon Mullis, "Towns, George Alexander," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, Vol. 2, 996–998.

15. White, *A Man Called White*, 21.

CHAPTER EIGHT. TWO MEETINGS AND ONE PARTY

1. "One Dollar and a Half a Place, $3 per couple a shame," *Atlanta Independent*, August 25, 1906, 1.

2. G. M. Howell, "Special Notice," *Independent*, August 25, 1906, 1; A. P. Nella, "The National Negro Business League," *Independent*, September 1, 1906, 1; "The People's Shoe Store," *Independent*, March 1, 1906, 1; *Indianapolis Freeman*, quoted in Mark Bauerlein, *Negrophobia: A Race Riot in Atlanta, 1906* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2001), 109.

3. "Special Notice," *Independent*, July 28, 1906, 8.

4. "Atlanta Happenings," *Independent*, September 1, 1906, 5.

5. "Booker Washington Rides Through City in Big Touring Car," *News*, August 28, 1906, 1; "Negro League Meets Today," *Constitution*, August 29, 1906, 3.

6. "Lawbreaking Negroes Worst Menace to Race," *Constitution*, August 30, 1906, 4.

7. J. W. Spearman, "News to the *Atlanta Independent*," August 11, 1906, 1.

8. "Booker Washington's Saratoga Performance," *Montgomery Advertiser*, August 16, 1905, 4; "Defense Made by Washington," *Constitution*, August 21, 1905, 1.

9. Letter from Booker T. Washington to Benjamin J. Davis, August 29, 1905, Booker T. Washington Papers.

10. "Washington Talks About Negro Criminals," *Journal*, August 28, 1906, 4.

11. Walter Foote diary, Kenan Research Center archives, Atlanta History Center.

12. "Meeting of Citizens to Suppress Crime," *Constitution*, September 1, 1906, 1.

13. Ibid. (the text of the petition is printed in this article); "Protest Made Against Ku Klux Klan by Best Citizens of the City and County," *Journal*, August 31, 1906, 3.

14. "Position of the News as to the Ku Klux," *News*, August 31, 1906. 6.

15. "Meeting of Citizens."

16. "Protest Made Against Ku Klux Klan." Many of these names represent long-standing Atlanta businesses. King & Spalding, the firm that Jack Spalding formed with fellow attorney Alexander King, is one of the largest and most powerful in the Southeast. Morris Rich's department store would be a legendary Atlanta mainstay for a century; Clarence Haverty would, in 1908, split from his father's business partner, Amos Rhodes, to form Haverty Furniture, which still exists today. Robert C. Alston's firm would eventually merge to create Alston and Bird, which has more than eight hundred attorneys. Ernest Woodruff would buy out Coca-Cola in 1919 and amass a fortune.

17. "Reception in Honor of Miss Laura Brown and Mr. J. L. Black Jr." *Independent*, September 15, 1906, 7.

CHAPTER NINE. LOW DIVES AND BLIND TIGERS

1. "Drive Out the Negro Dives," *Journal*, September 22, 1906, 5;
"Vagrant Negroes Fill Streets and Saloons at all Hours of the Day," *Constitution*, August 25, 1906, 1.

2. Watson, "Suggestions."

3. The description of the Decatur Street dives is pieced from newspaper accounts during the summer and fall of 1906 and also draws from a 1913 account from the *Journal Magazine*, reprinted in Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs*, Vol. 2, 607–609.

4. "Vagrant Negroes."

5. "The Baptist Preachers Speak Out," *Independent*, September 22, 1906, 4.

6. Sarah Judson, "Civil Rights and Civic Health: African American Women's Public Health Work in Early Twentieth-Century Atlanta," *NWSA Journal* 11, no. 3

(Fall 1999), 93. Addie Waites Hunton, Adeline Proctor, and Sylvia Bryant cited in Dorsey, *To Build Our Lives*, 104–106; for a discussion on the historical precedent of elite blacks' "racial improvement campaigns" for lower-class blacks, see also Mixon, *Atlanta Riot*, 40–41.

7. Bryant cited in Dorsey, *To Build Our Lives Together*, 104.

8. "Negroes Condemn Crimes of their Race," *Journal*, September 3, 1906, 7; "Negroes Condemn Crimes," *Constitution*, September 4, 1906, 8.

9. "Idlers and Loiterers Fallen on Evil Days," *Constitution*, August 29, 1906, 2.

10. Statistics, figures, and Broyles's biographical information in this section are drawn from Thomas H. Martin, *Atlanta and Its Builders: A Comprehensive History of the Gate City of the South*, Vol. 2 (Atlanta: Century Memorial Publishing Co., 1902), 198, 204–207, 637.

11. Gordon Noel Hurtel, "Police Matinee Pen Shots," *Constitution*, August 12, 1906, B6.

12. An advocate of black business, *Independent* editor Benjamin Davis urged the city council to permit blacks to own saloons rather than summarily closing them down. Davis claimed that the laws that allowed only white ownership meant that "dago bar joints" encouraged black vagrancy. "The whites are responsible for the existence of these dens of vice," he contended in "A Heart to Heart Talk with Our White Neighbors," *Independent*, September 1, 1906, 4.

13. Thomas Bennett, "Obituary: Thomas A. Dorsey," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, January 25, 1993, B6.

14. "A Heart to Heart Talk."

15. "Negroes Condemn Crimes."

CHAPTER TEN. CELEBRATION

1. "Thousands Greet Triumphal Procession of the Civic Official of Colonial Times, His Herald and Attendants in Silken Costumes," *Constitution*, September 4, 1906, 1; advertisements for R. M. Rose in *Independent*, *Constitution*, and other publications.

2. "Imposing Parade," *Journal*, September 3, 1906, 1.

3. Martin, *Atlanta and Its Builders*, 186; Cooper, *Official History*, 663; Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs*, Vol. 2, 373, 472–473.

4. Edward Bruffey, "Host Marches to Bloodless Victory," *Constitution*, September 4, 1906, 1; Whitehall viaduct history draws from Cooper, *Official History*, 664.

5. Edward Bruffey, "Most Magnificent Parade in History of the City is Promised Atlantans," *Constitution*, September 3, 1906, 1; "Imposing Parade and Brilliant Oratory Mark Atlanta's Labor Day Celebration," *Journal*, September 3, 1906, 1.

6. *Independent*, September 15, 1906, 6.

7. Edward Bruffey, "Labor Day Celebration on Monday Surpasses Those of Former Years," *Constitution*, September 4, 1906, 7.

8. Bruffey, "Labor Day Celebration on Monday"; "154,266 Persons Rode on Street Cars Labor Day," *Journal*, September 15, 1906, 1.

9. "75 Atlanta Boys off for College," *News*, September 9, 1906, B1; S. Fred Roach Jr., "Heisman, John William," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, Vol. 1, 433–434; Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs*, Vol. 2, 461.

10. "Bijou Opens Tomorrow with Minstrel Troupe," *Constitution*, September 2, 1906, 8D; Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs*, Vol. 2, 464.

11. "Alleged Assailant is Caught After Desperate Fight," *Journal*, September 3, 1906, 3.

12. "Atlanta Negro to Head Washington Schools," *Journal*, September 3, 1906, 1.

13. *Independent*, September 15, 1906, 6.

14. Vinson, "Hoke Smith," 313.

15. For details of the Watson-Smith collaboration, see Vinson, "Hoke Smith," 313–315, and Barton Shaw, "Watson, Thomas Edward," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, Vol. 2, 1040–1042.

16. "Absence of Tom Watson Causes Much Rejoicing," *Constitution*, September 5, 1906, 3.

17. "Smith Nominated by Anderson."

18. "Straight talk by Hoke Smith," *Journal*, September 4, 1906, 1.

19. "To Miss Laura Brown," *Independent*, September 3, 1906, 5; Laura Brown, "Atlanta Happenings," *Independent*, September 22, 1906, 5.

20. E. B. Barco, "Brown-Black Nuptial," *Independent*, September 8, 1906, 4.

CHAPTER ELEVEN. A VISIT FROM WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

1. "Bryan Had Watermelon First for His Breakfast," *Constitution*, September 21, 1906, 1; "Man of Hour Ruled City for a Day," *Constitution*, September 21, 1906, 1.

2. "Man of Hour."

3. "Atlanta Women Hear Mrs. Bryan," *Constitution*, September 21, 1906, 10; "Ladies Plan Welcome for Wife of W. J. Bryan," *Constitution*, September 20, 1906, 6B.

4. "Atlanta Women Hear Mrs. Bryan."

5. "Man of Hour."

6. Baker, *Following the Color Line*, 5–6.

7. Knowles Kimmel was also referred to in various news accounts as Kemmel, Kimble, Kimbal, and other variations. Baker, *Following the Color Line*, 5–6; "Woman Fights Off Negro Man; Puts Him to Flight with Pistol," *Georgian*, September 20, 1906, 1; "Mrs. J. A. Kimble Is Brutally Attacked by a Black Fiend," *Journal*, September 20, 1906, 1.

8. "Dollar Dinner for W. J. Bryan," *Constitution*, September 16, 1906, 4C.

9. "Negro, Rescued in Auto, Mrs. Kimmel's Assailant?" *Journal*, September 21, 1906, 3; "Militia Guard Negro Suspect from Violence," *Constitution*, September 21, 1906, 1.

10. Charles Daniel, "Sheriff in Automobile Saves Negro From Mob," *News*, September 21, 1906.

CHAPTER TWELVE. ORRIE BRYAN'S STORY

1. "Girl Jumps into Closet to Escape Negro Brute," *News*, September 21, 1906, 1; "Assault is Attempted on Miss Orrie Bryan Near Center of City," *Constitution*, September 21, 1906, 1.

2. "Assault is Attempted."

3. "Half-Clad Negro Tries to Break Into House; Bound Over By the Recorder," *Journal*, September 21, 1906, 1. Account of courtroom proceedings draws from the *Journal*, *Constitution*, *News*, and *Georgian* articles cited in this section.

4. "Father Begged."

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. "'Negro Dives and Clubs are the Cause of Frequent Assaults,'" *Journal*, September 21, 1906, 1.

8. "Negro Clubs the Cause of Assaults?" *Georgian*, September 21, 1906, 1.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN. "EXTRA! EXTRA!"

1. "Ku Klux Klan After Him in Beef Blood Warnings, *Constitution*, September 22, 1906, 7.

2. "Four attacks made on dives," *Constitution*, September 22, 1906, 7.

3. "Negro clubs and negro 'dives,'" *Constitution*, September 22, 1906, 6.

4. "The Baptist Preachers Speak Out."

5. "Burly Negro Attacks White Woman but is Frightened Off," *Georgian*, September 22, 1906.

6. "Inspected the Dives," *Constitution*, September 23, 1906, 3; "Crusade Against Negro Dives by Police Has Begun in Earnest," *Journal*, September 22, 1906, 1.

7. "22 Negro Restaurants Are Refused Licenses," *Journal*, September 22, 1906, 1.

8. "Nude Pictures Are Barred," C*onstitution*, September 23, B5.

9. "Drive Out the Negro Dives," *Journal*, September 22, 1906, 5.

10. The chronology of the "extra" editions is from later police and court reports and from Baker, *Following the Color Line*, 9–11.

11. "Four Attempts at Assault in One Day," *Constitution*, September 23, 1906, B1.

12. Ibid.

13. A large part of this section is based on a report published on the front page of the Sunday, September 23, edition of the *Journal* ("Decatur Street Was Undismayed Until 9 o'Clock When Threatened Riot Cleared the Whole Street"). Apparently most of the article had been filed the evening before in advance of the Sunday paper. The article states that Decatur Street began to clear around nine that evening as rumors of a riot spread. But other reports put the Holcomb "assault" at nine thirty and the outbreak of violence after ten.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN. RAGE

1. The portions of this chapter relating to Walter White draw largely from White's autobiography, *A Man Called White*.

2. White identified the bootblack as a worker at Alonzo Herndon's barbershop,

and Merritt (*The Herndons*, 86) refers to him as Herndon employee Fred Walton. But most historians think the victim was more likely Henry Welch from Leland's barbershop, identified in newspaper reports. Mixon (*Atlanta Riot*, 91) insists that no one from Herndon's was killed.

3. The re-creation of the riot's outbreak comes from the contemporary newspaper reports, including: "Many Negroes Fall Victim to Mob Which Holds Uptown in Its Grasp," *Journal*, September 23, 1906, 1; "Atlanta Mob Kills Ten."

4. "Mayor Woodward Passed Night on Street," *Constitution*, September 23, 1906, 4; "Chased Negroes All the Night," *Constitution*, September 23, 1906, B1.

5. Crowe, "Racial Massacre in Atlanta," 155.

6. "Chased Negroes All the Night"; "Prominent Leaders Plead with Mob," *News*, September 23, 1906, 20; "Atlanta Mob Kills Ten"; "Scenes and Incidents from the Reign of Terror," *News*, September 23, 1906, 20.

7. "Riot Calls Were Sounded and Militia Called Out," *Journal*, September 23, 1906, 1.

8. "Wire Cutters Isolated Nelms," *Journal*, September 23, 1906, 2.

9. Mixon, *Atlanta Riot*, 94–95.

10. Description of the violence outside the Piedmont Hotel draws from Crowe, "Racial Massacre," 159.

11. Crowe, "Racial Massacre," 162.

12. "Hoke Smith's Carriage and Driver Were Lost at Terminal," *Journal*, September 23, 1906, 5.

13. "Al Fields' Minstrels Had a Narrow Escape," *Constitution*, September 23, 1906, 2.

14. "Peters Street Raided," *Journal*, September 23, 1906, 1.

15. "Negro Man is Thrown Over the Forsyth St. Bridge," *News*, September 23, 1906, 20.

16. "Rioting Case Goes to Jury," *Constitution*, October 30, 1906, 7; "In the Courts," *Constitution*, September 30, 1906, 2; "Is This Justice?" *Independent*, November 10, 1906, 4.

17. "Atlanta Mob Kills Ten"; "Attack by Mobs on Street Cars," *Constitution*, September 23, 1906, B4; "Atlanta Mob Ridden City," *Afro-American Ledger* (Baltimore), September 29, 1906, 1.

18. Interview with Evelyn Witherspoon in *Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City, 1914–1948*, Clifford M. Kuhn, Harlon E. Joye, E. Bernard West (1990;

reprint, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 147–148. Citations are to the 2005 edition.

19. "Two Riot Calls Were Rung for First Time in Atlanta," *Journal*, September 23, 1906, 1.

20. "Bodies of Dead Negroes Taken Out of the City," *Constitution*, September 23, 1906, 2.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN. FIGHTING BACK

1. Walter White, *A Man Called White*, 10.

2. "Five Men Arrested," *News*, September 23, 1906, 20. The account of Sunday's events draws from extensive coverage in the *Constitution*, *Journal*, and *News.*

3. "State Troops Take Full Control of Entire City and Quiet Atlanta," *Constitution*, September 24, 1906, 1.

4. "Saloons Are Closed by Mayor," *Journal*, September 24, 1906, 2.

5. "Last Night's Riot and Its Lesson," *Journal*, September 23, 1906, 1.

6. "Race Riots on the Street Last Night the Inevitable Result of A Carnival of Crime Against Our White Women," *News*, September 23, 1906, 1.

7. "Due to Assaults on White Women," *Constitution*, September 23, 1906, B1.

8. Journalist Ray Stannard Baker, who came to Atlanta to report on the riot in October 1906, went to the Kimmels' farm in Oakland and found John Kimmel working in the field alone; his wife had gone away to stay with relatives and Kimmel himself was thinking of leaving Atlanta. Having their names in the papers had been too much to stand. Baker asked Kimmel if he would have wanted the man who attacked his wife to be lynched. "I have thought about that," John Kimmel admitted. "I'm a Christian man. My wife is a Christian woman. We've talked about it. What good would it do?" (*Following the Color Line*, 6–7)

9. "'Remove the Cause,' Wires Mayor Woodward," *News*, September 24, 1906, 2.

10. "Many Killed; Many Injured," *Constitution*, September 24, 1906, 1; Laura Brown, "Atlanta Happenings," *Independent*, September 22, 1906, 5.

11. "A Day and Night of Intense Uneasiness," *Journal*, September 24, 1906, 2.

12. Walter Foote diary, Kenan Research Center archives, Atlanta History Center.

13. "Rumors, Riots, Fires Kept the Police Busy," *Constitution*, September 24, 1906, 1.

14. Phil Garner, "How *Gone with the Wind* Burned Atlanta," *Atlanta*, November 1994.

15. "Cars Held Up by Mobs," *Constitution*, September 24, 1906, 3.

16. "Car Men Shot at Rioting Negroes," *Journal*, September 24, 1906, 3.

17. "Rumors, Riots."

18. Baker, "Atlanta Riot," 12.

19. Interview with June Dobbs Butts.

20. Walter White, *A Man Called White*, 10–12. White's account of defending the family home may have been exaggerated over time as White discussed the role the riot played in shaping his convictions, observes Kenneth Robert Janken, author of *White: The Biography of Walter White, Mr. NAACP*. Janken reviewed White's accounts over time, noting that "the shotgun made its first appearance in a 1930 profile of White in *The Nation*." Janken cites correspondence between White and his sisters Alice and Madeline, who were skeptical about the account that ultimately made it into Walter's autobiography. (16–18)

21. "Negro is Found Hanged to Tree," *News*, September 24, 1906, 1.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN. ATTACK ON BROWNSVILLE

1. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Litany of Atlanta," in *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, ed. James Weldon Johnson (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922).

2. Capeci and Knight, "Reckoning with Violence," 745–747.

3. "Many Negroes Receive Fines," *Constitution*, September 25, 1906, 2; "Two Negroes Are Indicted," *Constitution*, September 25, 1906, 2.

4. J. L. Black, "In Memory of Our Friend, Frank Smith," *Independent*, September 29, 1906, 5.

5. Ibid.

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